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ABSTRACT

This study examined critical issues related to including students with disabilities in the Texas assessment and accountability system and recommended a plan of action to address these issues. The statewide stakeholder group examining the issues focused particularly on local implementation barriers. The report begins with a discussion of assessment and accountability practices in Texas, followed by examination of four critical areas identified by the focus group: participation, accommodations, reporting, and implementation. High stakes accountability was seen as the underlying barrier to greater participation rates in state assessments by students with disabilities. Local variability and inconsistencies in allowable accommodations were found. Many questions about reporting of results for these students were raised, and significant obstacles to implementing expanded assessment and accountability systems were found. The recommended action plan addresses networking, research, and development in the four major areas. Appendices include details on the project, information on its national context, resource documents used, and information on related issues. (Contains 23 references.) (DB)

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Including Students with Disabilities in Statewide Assessment and Accountability Systems: A Study of the Issues

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Including Students with Disabilities in Statewide Assessment and Accountability Systems: A Study of the Issues

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Within national and state educational reform movements, greater emphasis is being placed on students with disabilities being a part of the accountability system. Although nearly all students are included in the Texas accountability system through their dropout and attendance rates, over 50% of students with disabilities are exempted from state assessments, and there is considerable variability in the exemption rates within districts and campuses. Recent legislation in Texas (Senate Bill 1, Texas Education Code, May, 1995) requires that an assessment system be developed for all students currently exempted from state assessments, and that their performance results be included in the accountability system reports.

Project Assignment

A statewide stakeholder group was convened to develop a document for the Texas Education Agency which examined the critical issues related to including students with disabilities in the Texas assessment and accountability system. This focus group was also asked to develop a recommended plan of actions designed to address the issues. It was not the charge of the focus group to develop "the solutions" to each issue, nor to address an extensive set of related issues, although these were noted for further consideration (e.g. other students with special needs, quality of the current state assessment instrument, adequacy of Individual Educational Plans).

In examining the issues, current state policies, procedures, and guidelines were taken into account by the focus group. The discussion of issues centered more around local implementation barriers than whether or not standards were in place at the state level. It was acknowledged that some remedies should be pursued at the policy level. However, with a continuing shift toward more responsiblity at the local level (i.e. site-based decision making; emphasis of Senate Bill 1), oversight of practices at the local level were designated as the greatest challenge.

Critical Issues

The Texas Education Agency directed that the issues be defined in four major areas: *participation, accommodation, reporting, and implementation.* The focus group reached consensus on a total of 29 issues. A brief synopsis includes:

- **Participation**

  High stakes accountability was seen as the underlying barrier to greater participation rates in state assessments by students with disabilities. Related assessment conclusions centered around local variability in *decision-making* about who should participate, *the appropriate use of exemptions,* and *a lack of appropriate assessment options.*

- **Accommodation**

  The allowable use of accommodations for state assessments was characterized as inconsistent in practice. Concerns were noted about local variability in *decision-making about the use, soundness, and appropriateness* of accommodations.

- **Reporting**

  The need to incorporate assessment results for students with disabilities into the accountability system raised questions of *where scores should be reported* (i.e. home campus/district), *how they should be reported* (i.e. categorically; change in performance over time; clearly interpreted), and *whether they should be reported differently* (i.e. separately from data for non-special education students; standard administration vs. use of accommodations/alternative assessments).

- **Implementation**

To implement expanded assessment and accountability systems in Texas, obstacles to be overcome were identified as *attitude, limited available resources, contradictions with existing state and federal statutes*, and *the high stakes purposes for which these systems are used.*

Assumptions Underlying an Action Plan for Texas

A set of nine assumptions related to assessment and accountability guided the completion of the recommended action plan. The focus group came to consensus on the basic tenets which would underly the development of strategies to be recommended to the Texas Education Agency.

The assumptions related to the **accountability** system described a ***single, comprehensive accountability system***, characterized as *fair, encompassing diversity, ensuring continuous improvement, including training provisions*, and *supporting the improved performance of and expectations for students with disabilities.*

Assessment assumptions centered around the need for and development of an ***alternative assessment system***, with assurances of *reasonable accommodations* and *compliance with state and federal nondiscrimination regulations.*

Recommended Action Plan

Clearly, it was more difficult to reach consensus on the action plan. It was recognized by the focus group that there are not quick, simple, easy-to-implement solutions to the complex issues identified in this document. The strategies recommended in the action plan were categorized into three components: ***networking, research***, and ***development***. The ***development*** strategies were further subdivided into *assessment, policy, reporting*, and *training*. Recommendations are summarized as:

- **Networking**

Strategies were included to *eliminate duplication of effort in Texas.* These strategies contained suggestions for *formal linkages* among Texas, national entities, and other states. *Collaboration on ongoing research and development activities* should include those related to:

a) previously developed alternative assessment systems,
b) decision-making guidelines,
c) legal issues, and
d) reporting procedures for state and national assessment and accountability systems.

- **Research**

Recommended research strategies encompassed ongoing follow-up studies of students with disabilities to determine the *appropriateness of exemptions* and to track the *unintended consequences* of including these students in the assessment and accountability systems.

- **Development**

Development strategies endorsed by the focus group identified the following needs:

Assessment - Extensive development of an alternative assessment system was recommended, to include an advisory group of practitioners to give guidance to future state assessment revisions and development considerations.

Policy - At the policy level, development strategies described the need for *guidelines for decision-making about assessment options and appropriate accommodations.*

Reporting - Reporting strategies focused on the need for a *reporting system inclusive of the results for students with disabilities*, with a design for differentiated reporting, a phase-in requirement, an assignment of results to the home campus/district, the use of indicators of progress over time, and a concise description of the system for public use.

Training - In order to ensure the successful implementation of new assessment and accountability reporting systems, strategies were recommended to develop training for *implementation* and for *analysis and application of results to district/campus improvement planning*.

Summary and Implications

The focus group recognized that the recommendations will take time to implement, should be appropriately phased in, and will require the allocation of considerable resources. Determination will need to be made regarding the intent of the Senate Bill 1 requirements not only to develop an alternative assessment system, but also to include assessment results in the accountability reports. Many suggestions in the action plan will be dependent on the findings of research on additional technical issues in the assessment of students with disabilities. Other recommendations will require significant changes in the ways in which people think about education, assessment, and accountability for all students. However, the ultimate return on the investment will be the assurance of accountability for the success and progress of all students served by the public school system in Texas.

Including Students with Disabilities in Statewide Assessment and Accountability Systems: A Study of the Issues

Including Students with Disabilities in Statewide Assessment and Accountability Systems: A Study of the Issues

INTRODUCTION

Students with disabilities comprise approximately 10% of the nation's schoolage population (Sixteenth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1994). In addition to having single or multiple identified disabilities that may interfere with learning, they also share educational risk factors with other school populations. These may include high dropout rates, high unemployment rates, and restricted life opportunities due to limited skill preparation for post-school environments (Bates, 1994).

Educational reform is directed toward measuring progress toward educational goals for all of the students served by the public school system. However, exclusion from the accountability system of any portion of the student population results in decisions being made with incomplete data. When students with disabilities are left out of the assessment process and the subsequent results data, they are also left out of any reform effort (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, McGrew, & Shriner, 1994).

In order to address this issue in Texas, the Texas Education Agency awarded a six-month grant to the Region IV Education Service Center (ESC) in April, 1995, to facilitate the work of a statewide focus group of stakeholders. The directive of the TEA was to develop a document that identifies critical issues related to including students with disabilities in Texas' statewide assessment and accountability systems. This document represents:

a) the collective thinking of a focus group of more than 20 stakeholders who participated in its development,
b) consultative advice from TEA staff,
c) input from statewide advocacy groups, and
d) feedback each focus group member solicited from the constituent groups they represented.

The paper includes information on national educational reforms in assessment and accountability for students with disabilities as related to this movement in Texas, and current assessment and accountability practices in the state. Based on the critical issues identified by the focus group, consistent with continuing Texas educational reform, a list of assumptions and a recommended action plan were developed.

Purpose

This document should serve multiple purposes. *First*, it will identify the progress Texas has made in the development of state policies/procedures/guidelines for assessment and accountability as they relate to students with disabilities. *Second*, it will outline concerns identified by the *project focus group* about how these are being implemented in the field. *Third*, it will provide suggested actions that the Texas Education Agency may want to consider as it expands the reporting of data for students with disabilities in the state's assessment and accountability systems.

Although this work was commissioned and begun prior to the completion of the new Texas Education Code (TEC) as passed by the 74th Texas legislature in May, 1995, there was significant tracking of the new legislative requirements. Therefore, a *fourth* and final purpose of this work should be to support the commissioner of education, who is required by the new TEC (Senate Bill 1, Section 39.027) to develop and propose an assessment system for evaluating the progress of students exempted from current state assessments.

The stakeholders worked together during several meetings as a focus group to (1) verify the extent to which issues for other states are issues for Texas, (2) clarify critical issues for Texas, (3) identify a set of fundamental assumptions to guide assessment and accountability efforts in Texas, and (4) develop a recommended action plan for addressing the issues in Texas. Much of the initial information provided to the focus group was drawn from several sources. These sources are identified in **Exhibit 1**. In addition, advocacy groups and staff from a number of divisions within the Texas Education Agency provided the group with extensive information.

The overall focus of this project was to assist Texas in moving toward an educational system that is accountable for the results of public education for all students. Thus, there are two avenues the group followed. First, it examined the critical issues for increasing the involvement of students with disabilities in statewide assessments. Second, it looked at the issues related to accountability for the performance of those students, including those who cannot take the existing statewide assessment, recognizing that these students will need other assessment options.

Note: Acronyms are used extensively in this paper. The meaning of these acronyms is explained when first introduced. A guide to all acronyms is attached at the end of this report (see Exhibit 2). Terms that might be unfamiliar or used to mean different things in different places are defined in a glossary at the end of the paper(see Exhibit 3). An annotated resource list is included (see Exhibit 4), and the process used to develop this paper is described in detail in Appendix A.

THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

There are many reasons that Texas, like other states, is examining the issues surrounding the statewide assessment of students with disabilities. Over the past several years there have been extensive efforts to reform education at all levels, with increased emphasis on accountability for results. States are setting standards for pupil performance, and are either relying on existing state assessment systems or developing new systems to track educational progress (Office of Technology Assessment, 1992). Educational programs in the United States have implemented accountability systems to provide assurances to stakeholders (both inside and outside schools) that expectations for higher levels of student achievement are being met. Accountability systems typically include goals, indicators of success toward meeting those goals, analysis of data, reporting procedures, and a set of consequences or sanctions. The purpose of amassing indicators of results is to determine whether the educational system is making expected progress and to guide improvement efforts (Clark, 1992).

Unfortunately, most standards-setting, accountability, and assessment systems are excluding large numbers of students with disabilities (McGrew, Thurlow, Shriner, & Spiegel, 1992; Ysseldyke, Thurlow, & Shriner, 1994). And, there have been differential rates of exclusion among states, and among districts and school campuses within states, resulting in:

- Incomplete information for policy formulation,
- Unfair and invalid comparisons among states and districts, and
- Decisions that do not take into account the needs of students with disabilities.

Concerns about these results have reached the point that assessment and accountability systems that include all students are being demanded, both nationally and in states. A detailed description of what is happening in national data collection programs in the United States and in the statewide assessments is provided in **Appendix B.**

National Data Collection

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is our nation's "report card." Yet, up until this past year, more than 60% of students with disabilities were excluded each time it was administered. The problem of exclusion was first recognized in 1990 when NAEP results began to be reported for individual states. Analyses revealed that exclusion rates varied among states, ranging from 33% to 87%, and that these variations affected the ranking of states. Furthermore, it became evident that a national data collection program was inadequate if it did not involve all students who were in the educational system. Major changes in NAEP and other national data collection programs have occurred as a result of these findings. For example:

- In 1992, sampling for the National

Education Longitudinal Study was redesigned to overcome the excessive exclusion of students with disabilities from its samples.

- In 1993, interviews for the National Adult Literacy Survey were revised to allow for the participation of more individuals with disabilities, and data on the performance of individuals with disabilities were reported.
- In 1994, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) began exploring ways to increase the participation of students with disabilities in NAEP.
- In 1995, NCES received approval from the National Assessment Governing Board to take the appropriate steps to make increased participation possible (by using revised guidelines) and to explore the use of accommodations by students needing them.

Statewide Assessments

States likewise are actively addressing how to increase the participation of students with disabilities in their accountability systems. In most states, accountability measurements are based solely on test scores. Some of what is known about state tests is:

- In the past, many states included less than 25% of their students with disabilities in the statewide assessment.
- Exclusion from statewide assessments has occurred when tests are developed, when tests are administered, and when results are summarized or reported.
- While most states allow the use of accommodations during assessments, the accommodations that may be used vary by state as well as within states according to the disability or the specific test.
- Both the application of guidelines for making decisions about participation and the determination of appropriate accommodations vary among school districts and school campuses within states.

During the past five years, states have been more sensitive to the exclusion of students with disabilities from statewide assessments. Among the evidence of this movement is:

- Some states have now developed new assessments and accountability systems to dramatically increase the participation of students with disabilities.
- Recent federal legislation has made it requisite that states include all students in their accountability and assessment systems. These include reform legislation (*Goals 2000*), elementary and secondary education (*Improving America's Schools Act*), and transition to work (*School to Work Opportunities Act*).
- The new *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* is expected to require that students with disabilities be participants in state assessments.
- Proposals for federal funds have been solicited to address the technical issues in the participation of students with disabilities and the use of accommodations.
- The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is forming a State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) for states to work on issues related to assessment of students with disabilities.

All of these events reinforce the need to identify and address issues related to including students with disabilities in the Texas assessment and accountability system.

ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES IN TEXAS

In 1994-95, there were more than 350,000 students with disabilities served by Texas public schools. The academic performance of approximately 47% of them was evaluated in the most recent administration of the statewide assessment, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Currently, the major sources of accountability for the performance of students with disabilities in Texas schools are the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and the Results-Based Monitoring (RBM) system. In practice, whether IEPs are appropriate, well-developed, or used for planning needs review (see Appendix D). The RBM system monitors program compliance and examines continued student growth, but does not yet connect results to the statewide accountability system.

To avoid confusion, it is necessary to differentiate between *assessment systems* and *accountability systems*. The *assessment system* is a subset of the accountability system, and includes the TAAS and end-of-course exams. In Texas, the *accountability system* includes data from several indicators to make judgments about how campuses, districts, and the state as a whole are performing (see Appendix C for a listing of resource documents extensively used as a foundation for the information contained in this section).

All students in Texas public schools are currently included, at least partially, in the accountability system (see Figure 1). Students with disabilities are included when attendance rates and dropout rates are calculated, and therefore are factored into the accountability ratings. However, students with disabilities are not factored into the data on performance in the assessment portion of the accountability system. Even though over 40% of students with disabilities do take the TAAS, their performance is not counted when accountability ratings are calculated. Separate data are available to districts on the performance of students with disabilities when they take the TAAS, but the data are not reported as part of the accountability rating system.

The Texas Education Code in Senate Bill 1 (Section 39.027) requires that not later than December 1, 1996, the commissioner shall develop and propose to the legislature an assessment system for evaluating the progress of students exempted from the state assessment. Not later than the 1998-1999 school year, the performance of students who participate in that system must be included in the academic excellence indicator system, the campus report card, and the performance report. Meeting this mandate will require a review of the current system. The information in this section provides a description of some of the history of the Texas assessment and accountability systems, an overview of the current systems, and the extent to which students with disabilities are involved.

History of State Assessment and Accountability

Students with disabilities have always been included to some extent in the Texas state testing process and participation rates have always been reported. As Texas moved from testing with the TABS (Texas Assessment of Basic Skills) to the TEAMS (Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills) tests, students with disabilities participated with limited allowable modifications. The introduction five years ago of the TAAS tests moved assessment of basic skills to higher academic levels, including higher order thinking and problem solving skills, with tests beginning in the third grade.

Field testing of the TAAS has not excluded students with disabilities and districts have been allowed to provide certain modifications, although no Braille version was provided in the initial field test. Since then, students taking Braille versions of TAAS tests take the embedded field test items included each time TAAS is administered.

In the initial TAAS testing years, students with disabilities were either exempt from the test administration, or their scores were reported in the district's results for special education students. These scores were also included in the district's report of results for all students.

Participation. For the 1992-93 test administration, the first non-standard administration (oral) was allowed. In 1993-94, exempted students at all tested grades except exit level could be administered the TAAS tests

Figure 1

CURRENT INVOLVEMENT IN STATE SYSTEMS

RELATIVE TO SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS IN TEXAS	**ASSESSMENT**	**ACCOUNTABILITY**	
		INDIVIDUAL	**INSTITUTIONAL**
PARTICIPATION	Based on annual ARD committee decision	For diploma: • must get state and/or local credits • must pass exit level assessment, based on ARD committee decision	* Yes
ACCOMMODATION	Allowable modifications as recommended by the ARD committee and as reflected in the student's IEP	——	——
REPORTING	Disaggregated from non-special education students	* Yes	* Yes
IMPLEMENTATION	Assessment results not aggregated	* Yes	* Yes

*** Special Education data included for dropout rate, attendance rate, college admission results (SAT/ACT); not included for assessment results or any calculations related to accountability ratings which use assessment results**

for local evaluative purposes. Results for all exempt special education students were not aggregated with the results for non-exempt special education students. The determination of accountability ratings for districts and campuses did not include results for exempt or non-exempt special education students. Students assessed under these circumstances were able to receive more extensive modifications, if needed, since they were not required to be tested under standardized conditions.

During the past three years' administrations of the TAAS, an average of 4% of all students eligible to take the exit test were exempted by the Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee. For the 1993-94 testing, over 50% of the total special education population in Texas was exempt from all levels tested, with 47% participating in the TAAS. There were no special exemptions for the new end-of-course exams (algebra and biology) unless significant content modifications were made for students in these courses. However, the tests could be administered for local purposes to students whose IEPs specified content modifications (see "Questions and Answers on Senate Bill 1," TEA, 1995).

Accommodations. Allowable accommodations for the TAAS have been compared favorably with those of other states (see **Exhibit 2**). The current Texas Administrative Code establishes that specific modifications for TAAS be outlined in the test administration materials (see Appendix E). The nonstandard oral administration allowance continues to be a part of the testing process. In addition, there is a process for requesting additional accommodations, and these are considered by the Texas Education Agency on a case-by-case basis.

Reporting. Due to expressed concerns about the misuse of aggregated test data to compare districts, changes were made in methods of reporting testing results. Initially, media reports included the data of all students tested, with inaccurate comparisons being made between school districts. That is, not all districts used the same process for including students with disabilities in the test administration, and comparisons were not being made on the same sets of data.

Beginning with the 1992-93 reporting, results were no longer reported by disability (although separate data had been reported through 1991-92). Beginning with the 1993-94 reporting, the "all students" report was eliminated and only the disaggregated TAAS data of non-special education students were used for comparisons between school districts.

All special education students' TAAS data were included in a separate report, even if they were placed in all regular education classes and were not exempted from testing by ARD committees. In addition, only limited data have been collected or reported for the types or frequency of modifications used in the TAAS administration. Currently, data are collected regarding the use of oral administration for math and on tests administered in Braille or large print (TEA, 1995).

Implementation. The stakes in Texas can be quite high. Most notable, the following are included in state statute:

- Accountability ratings are given on an annual basis to each district and campus based on TAAS results of non-special education students, and dropout and attendance rates of all students (including special education students).
- Performance data included in Texas' Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) may be used to evaluate responsible educators in the public education system, from the commissioner of education to district superintendents to campus principals to classroom teachers.
- Consequences for lower or decreased ratings range from peer review visits up to and including district oversight by monitors and/or masters.
- Financial incentives are also possible for those districts/campuses receiving exemplary ratings.

Accountability ratings or labels carried by campuses or districts may impact the relationship between schools and their communities.

In an effort to ensure that every campus receives an accountability rating, even though students may not be tested in those grade levels (i.e., Pre-K to 2), those campuses receive the same ratings as feeder schools with which they are paired. Alternative campuses are given accountability ratings on either the standard criteria or may choose the option of being evaluated under different performance standards (Accountability Manual, 1995), and their data are included in the district reports.

Students with disabilities are currently able to receive a diploma upon completion of their IEP. However, the 74th legislature did consider requiring all students with disabilities to pass the TAAS test to receive a diploma. It could be harmful to students with disabilities if this were to happen.

State Assessment System

The statewide assessment system in place in Texas was designed to evaluate the performance of students in public schools. The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) is a criterion-referenced assessment, based on the essential elements of the curriculum.

Description of Assessment System

TAAS specifications were developed to correlate essential elements to instructional targets. The state tests are designed to assess student competencies in:

- reading, writing, math, science, and social studies (at state determined grade levels 3-8)
- secondary exit level tests in math, English language arts and writing
- end-of-course exams in Algebra I and Biology I (with additional tests to be developed in English and U.S. History).

To receive a high school diploma, students must meet passing standards on the exit level tests in English language arts, writing, and math or on specified end-of-course exams once they are in place (see "Questions &Answers on Senate Bill 1," TEA, 1995).

Current State Assessment Practices Related to Students with Disabilities

By decision of the Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee, students with disabilities may :

a) take the standard TAAS,
b) take the TAAS with allowable modifications, or
c) be exempted from the TAAS.

No alternative system is yet in place for students with disabilities. The only alternative measures used in Texas are those for students of limited English proficiency (LEP). State Board of Education rules for student assessment were revised in January, 1994 to address the testing of LEP students. Although these students may be exempted from taking the English TAAS, academic progress must be assessed with alternative measures. In essence, each of these students must be tested with grade appropriate English TAAS, grade appropriate Spanish TAAS (as available), or alternative assessments. The alternative measures must be valid and reliable. Alternative assessment reports must show student improvements in reading, writing and mathematics. Criteria must be reported which are used to determine "appropriate improvement" to insure that students are making sufficient progress to pass the English TAAS. A list of approved tests which may be used for alternative assessments is provided by the TEA.

Results for students with disabilities who take the TAAS, with or without modifications, are currently compiled as a separate report from the rest of the student population. Students with disabilities are not included at this time in the requirement of passing the exit level TAAS as a condition of receipt of their diplomas. The exception to this occurs when the ARD committee recommends that the student complete the minimum academic credit requirements applicable to non-special education students, including passing the exit level assessment. The TAAS results for students with disabilities are not included in the accountability system for the campus and district. Senate Bill 1 (1995) requires the development of an assessment system for evaluating the progress of students exempted from state-required assessments (Section 39.027c.).

Other Assessment Efforts

A series of Special Education Effectiveness Studies have been undertaken to study student performance in life skill areas of education, employment, independent living, recreational, social and leisure skills (see State Plan for Special Education in Texas, 1995). These studies include:

- A retrospective study of 250 students who have exited the public schools prior to the requirement of an Individual Transition Plan (ITP): The study tracks productivity, integration into the community, and independence.
- A longitudinal study of 1000 students for four years following school exit: The study tracks outcomes regarding the appropriateness of the essential elements and students' successful integration into the community.
- A study of 300 special education students in their final school year: The study focuses on low incidence populations (e.g. severe disabilities, etc.) and the effects of the transition process, i.e. placement at graduation, service needs, and the IEP-ITP relationship.
- A case study approach in 5-6 Texas communities of the family-community experience: The study focuses on satisfaction and quality of services from public education, state agencies, and private providers, i.e. degree of preparation, interpersonal relationships, access to services, employment, and community acceptance.

State Accountability System

An integrated accountability system is in place which is used to evaluate the performance of the 1050 public school districts and more than 6000 campuses in Texas. This system incorporates required district and campus data which are used to generate:

- district accreditation status,
- campus ratings,
- district and campus recognition for high performance and performance improvement, and
- campus, district, and state-level reports.

Description of Accountability System Reporting

Accountability for Texas public school system performance is examined through the use of three performance indicator reports. These include the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), the School Report Card, and the Performance Report. District accreditation status and campus ratings depend on meeting state assessment, dropout rate, and attendance rate standards.

Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS)

The Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) includes profile information regarding school and district staff, students and finances. Campus and district performance on indicators used as the basis for accountability ratings, rewards, and reports are the major component of the AEIS (see Figure 2).

As a performance indicator report, AEIS includes the following campus and district data:

Indicators in place through the 1994-95 school year (Accountability Manual, February 1995)

1. Passing rates on required assessments (Subchapter B [TEC])
2. Enrollment and counts of students tested
3. Attendance rate
4. Dropout rate
5. College admissions results (SAT/ACT)
6. Advanced course completion
7. Growth on the Texas Learning Index (TLI)
8. TAAS/TASP equivalency

Revised indicators (Senate Bill 1, Section 39.051)

1. Results of assessment instruments required (Subchapter B [TEC, Senate Bill 1])
2. Dropout rate
3. Student attendance rate
4. The percentage of graduating students who pass secondary exit-level assessments (TAAS/TASP equivalency)
5. Percentage of graduating students who complete the recommended high school program (SBOE)
6. College admissions results (SAT/ACT)
7. Percentage of students taking end-of-course exams
8. Percentage of students exempted from the assessment program

Minimal changes to the indicators resulted from Senate Bill 1. Most notably, the percentage of students exempted from the assessment program was added and the percentage of students taking the end-of-course

Figure 2

ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

CURRENT SYSTEM (THROUGH 94-95)

BASE INDICATORS

(determine accountability ratings)

- Assessment results
- Dropout rate
- Attendance rate

ADDITIONAL INDICATORS

(acknowledge high performance)

- College admission results (SAT/ACT)

SYSTEM UNDER SENATE BILL 1 (SECTION 39. 072)

AEIS - (1-6)

- Assessment results
- Dropout rate
- Attendance rate
- Percentage passing TAAS/TASP equivalency
- Completion recommended high school program
- College admission results (SAT/ACT)

POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Compliance with statutory requirements and SBOE rule
  - -reporting PEIMS data
  - -high school graduation requirements
  - -non-exempted activities
- Effectiveness of district special education program based on most recent compliance review

exams was stipulated along with those completing the recommended high school program.

School Report Card

The Texas Education Agency is required by statute to produce a School Report Card for every campus in the state. Each campus is required to provide a copy to the parent or guardian of every student. Under the requirements of TEC [Senate Bill 1] (Section 39.052), the School Report Card is to include:

1. the AEIS (indicators 1 through 8),
2. student/teacher ratios, and
3. administrative and instructional costs per student.

Performance Report

An additional indicator of public school system accountability is an annual performance report describing the educational performance ratings (accreditation status) of the district and each campus in the district. The report includes campus performance objectives and progress toward those objectives. The report is to also include a comparison of the performance of each district and each campus to previous performance, to state-established standards, and to "comparable improvement" (measured against a "profile developed from a state total student performance data base which exhibits substantial equivalence to the characteristics of students served by the campus or district" [Accountability Manual, February, 1995]).

Accreditation Status

AEIS Indicators 1 through 6 are those to be used to determine accreditation ratings for campuses and districts. In practice, these are subdivided into base indicators and additional indicators (see Figure 2). Base indicators are those required to meet minimum accreditation standards. Additional indicators are used for additional acknowledgment and to measure performance beyond the minimum. Districts and campuses may be rated as ***exemplary, recognized, accredited/acceptable, or accredited warned/unacceptable***. Data do not yet exist for all indicators, and standards have yet to be determined once actual performance results are analyzed ("Questions and Answers on Senate Bill 1," TEA, 1995).

Accountability Systems Reporting as Related to Students with Disabilities

Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS)

In the profile section, data for students with disabilities currently appear as separate reports from non-special education students for number of graduates and retention rates (due to wide variation in local retention practices).

Data for students with disabilities have been aggregated in the data and campus reports for enrollment, attendance, dropout, college admissions tests and advanced course completion. Disaggregated assessment data are reported in a separate document. Growth on the Texas Learning Index (TLI) is based on student progress across grades in reading and math (TAAS scores) and has not been planned to include data for students with disabilities (see Figure 3).

School Report Card Related to Students with Disabilities

Data included for students with disabilities consists of those AEIS indicators described previously, student/teacher ratios, and cost data. With the new AEIS indicator of number of students exempted, this new information should now appear and be reported to parents as a new element on the School Report Card (see Figure 3).

Performance Report Related to Students with Disabilities

Information on students with disabilities is to be included in the performance report to the extent that it is already included in the reports which impact the district and campus accreditation ratings. That is, no assessment results are included. Data are included for enrollment, attendance, dropout rate, college admissions data, and advanced course completion (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Reporting Requirements- Senate Bill 1

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE INDICATOR SYSTEM	SCHOOL REPORT CARD	PERFORMANCE REPORT
1. Assessment results 2. Dropout rate 3. Student attendance rates 4. Percentage passing TAAS/TASP equivalency 5. Completion recommended high school program 6. College admission results (SAT/ACT) 7. Percentage taking end-of-course exams 8. Percentage exempted from assessment program	1. AEIS indicators (1-8) 2. Student/teacher ratios 3. Administrative and instructional costs per student	1. Accreditation status, district and campus, based on • Assessment results • Dropout rate • Attendance rate 2. Progress toward campus performance objectives 3. District/campus comparisons to • Previous performance • State established standards • Comparable improvement

CURRENT REPORTING OF DATA FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

INCLUDED IN:	AEIS indicators: • Enrollment • Attendance rate • Dropout rate • College admissions results • Advanced course completion	• AEIS indicators Attendance rate Dropout rate College admissions results • Students/teacher ratios • Cost data	• Accreditation Dropout rate Attendance rate • Progress toward campus performance objectives
SEPARATE REPORTS FOR:	• Number of graduates • Assessment results	• Percent enrollment	
NOT INCLUDED IN:	• Aggregate assessment results	• Aggregate assessment results	• Aggregate assessment results • District/campus comparisons

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Current Educational Reforms Related to Assessment and Accountability

Two additional efforts are underway in Texas which are correlated to the assessment and accountability systems. One of these is the re-defining of the core areas for curriculum, the Essential Knowledge and Skills Clarification process. The statewide assessment system is based on these content standards. The second effort is a new monitoring system which reviews student performance and program operations for all special programs in Texas' school districts.

Essential Elements/Essential Knowledge and Skills Clarification Process

The Essential Elements of instruction for Texas public schools were developed as a result of a legislative directive, were adopted in 1984, and were first implemented in the 1985-86 school year. Currently, a clarification process is underway which represents the second five-year review. This review will yield the Essential Knowledge and Skills for all subjects taught in kindergarten through grade 12. These core areas of knowledge and skills must be included in the foundation curriculum and will be used for guidance in the enrichment curriculum for Texas public schools.

Included in the charge to the clarification teams is that the Essential Knowledge and Skills *must be appropriate for special populations*. The product will specify what all students should know and be able to do, as well as specify levels of performance. The product will serve as the foundation for the statewide assessment system. The clarification process is underway for all content areas and field review is scheduled for completion in the spring of 1996.

Results-Based Monitoring (RBM)

Results-Based Monitoring is a monitoring system for assessing student performance and compliance in special programs. Local staff assess how well students are performing and whether the special program is operating in accordance with program requirements. This local assessment helps identify program strengths, priorities for improvement, and any needed corrective actions.

The Results-Based Monitoring System began in 1992-93 as a pilot with 16 districts. The pilot continued in 1993-94 with an additional 50 pilot sites. For both pilot years, each district was monitored for all programs covered by the RBM system. During the 1994-96 benchmark year, approximately 140 new districts will collect data on one or more special programs.

Indicators for the AEIS, disaggregated by program, include:

1. the percentage of students who pass TAAS
2. the attendance rate
3. the dropout rate

Performance indicators center around continued growth of students over previous performance results. Specifically, the following are evaluated:

a. continued growth of students dismissed from special education into general education
b. continued growth of students served in integrated educational settings
c. continued growth in areas related to disabilities
d. continued growth toward areas identified in the Individualized Transition Plans
e. employment, postsecondary education or training involvement for previous year graduates
f. retention rate

Continued growth is measured by both formal and informal measures. Assessment may include the TAAS, alternative assessments, parent report, teacher report, or other measures. These student performance results are utilized locally and are intended to guide planning for improvement. This may include a consultative visit from the TEA. However, the results are not used to trigger compliance exceptions, data verification visits from the Texas Education Agency, or accountability ratings. They are merely ways in which data is collected for analysis and are not yet tied to public accountability for what is found.

CRITICAL ISSUES

To develop the issues related to including students with disabilities in the state's assessment and accountability systems, the focus group proceeded with two basic considerations. First, some issues were thought to correspond to oversight needs at the state level for monitoring and policy development. Secondly, however, the emphasis of Senate Bill 1 (as well as site-based decision-making) reinforced the shift of responsibility to the local level for educational practices and results. Therefore, local implementation practices were identified as the greatest challenge. In the creation of solutions to the issues identified in this document, it will be important to determine which areas are appropriate for the state to address and which ones should be regulated locally.

The many issues in the Texas statewide assessment of students with disabilities are grouped into the four broad areas identified by the Texas Education Agency: *participation, accommodation, reporting, and implementation.* Issues outside of the four areas, or those not considered to be a part of the charge to the focus group, are listed as related issues in Appendix D.

Participation Issues

Ten participation issues were identified by the focus group. Two of the issues are relevant to participation in accountability systems, while the other eight are specific to participation in state assessments. All are listed here first, then each is discussed for clarification.

Accountability

1. A combination of high stakes accountability and exclusion of test scores for students with disabilities leads to many unintended consequences.
2. There is disagreement about responsibility for educational results for students with disabilities.

Assessment

1. There is disagreement about which students with disabilities should participate in state assessments.
2. Large numbers of students with disabilities are exempted by ARD committees from state assessments.
3. Concerns exist about the role and function of the ARD committee related to decisions about participation in state assessments.
4. Students with disabilities in unique settings (e.g. separate schools, institutions) are routinely excluded from state assessments.
5. Exemption rules are applied differently across settings, and adherence to exemption guidelines is not monitored.
6. The lack of adequate accommodations or alternative assessment systems keeps many students with disabilities from participation in state assessments.
7. There are questions about whether decisions about participation should differ as a function of the severity of disability or the category of disability.
8. The reliability, validity, and appropriateness of many assessments are questionable for students with disabilities.

Participation in Accountability Systems:
Issue 1. A combination of high stakes accountability and exclusion of test scores for students with disabilities leads to many unintended consequences.

Current research indicates that there are at least five unintended consequences of high stakes testing systems:

- Increased retention of students at grade level,
- Increased referral of students to special education,
- Increased occurrences of dropping out of school,
- Placement of students in separate classrooms or buildings, and
- Misleading comparisons of test performance among districts and home campuses.

All of these unintended consequences have either been documented or informally reported to be occurring in Texas. For example, increased referrals to special education have been noted after the first administration of the exit exam in 10th grade and referrals to special education continue into grade 12 (see TEA letter, 1992, Appendix D).

The exclusion issue in Texas is directly related to issues of representation. When decisions are made about schools, districts, or classrooms based on performance data, and data concerning students with disabilities are excluded, the decisions do not reflect consideration of the needs of students with disabilities. In some cases, students with disabilities are "out of sight," and therefore "out of mind," in the planning process for helping schools or districts improve student performance.

Participation in Accountability Systems:
Issue 2. There is disagreement about responsibility for educational results for students with disabilities.

Research in other parts of the country has documented that there does not always exist a belief in shared responsibility by all adults in the school for the education of students with disabilities (Ysseldyke, Christenson, & Thurlow, 1993). While this research has not been conducted in Texas, focus group members and their constituents viewed the application of this finding to Texas as appropriate. Even though a student may spend most of his or her day in the general education classroom, the student who receives special education services may still be viewed as the responsibility of the special education teacher. This view is supported when the TAAS scores of the special education student do not count in performance ratings, even if the student takes the test. If the student has mastered the content areas that are covered in the regular classroom and evaluated by TAAS, his or her performance will still not be included in the campus report card.

This disagreement about responsibility for results is increased when students with disabilities receive all or part of their instruction in separate settings (other than home campus) or outside their district of residence. Who will be accountable, who will assume responsibility (often translated into rewards or sanctions) for the results of education for students with disabilities, including those who receive all or part of their instruction in separate classes, settings, or districts?

Participation in Assessments:
Issue 1. There is disagreement about which students with disabilities should participate in state assessments.

Although there is general consensus that all students should be a part of the accountability system, there appears to be disagreement about the meaning of "all" when used in reference to the TAAS. Few educators or parents in Texas would propose that "all means all," that it means all students should participate in the TAAS. Some people believe that there are some students who should be exempted from TAAS because it does not appropriately measure some student's ability level. Some would exempt only those students with severe cognitive impairments. Others would exempt any student who might have a significant learning problem. And yet others would exempt only students with behavior disabilities because their potentially disruptive behavior might depress the performance of other students taking TAAS. Finally, many people believe that all students should participate in state assessments, but to do so will require the addition of an alternative assessment for some students.

Participation in Assessments:
Issue 2. Large numbers of students with disabilities are exempted by ARD committees from state assessments.

In Texas, the ARD committee has responsibility for making decisions about participation in TAAS. Large numbers (approximately 53%) of students with disabilities are either exempted from the TAAS, as recommended by the ARD committee (Briand, 1995; NCEO, 1995), or are not even considered as part of the pool of students who should take TAAS. Among the latter group are students who are in residential settings. Students in alternative learning environments may or may not take TAAS depending on the approach chosen by the school.

In reports of current practices, decisions regarding the exemption of a student from TAAS show inconsistent patterns. Decisions may range from few exemptions to most students with disabilities being exempted from TAAS to only students with certain categories of disabilities being considered as eligible to take TAAS, rather than it being an individual decision as intended.

Participation in Assessments:
Issue 3. Concerns exist about the role and function of the ARD committee related to decisions about participation in state assessments.

Although the TEA has issued guidelines for participation of students with disabilities in the TAAS, there are continuing concerns about how decisions are being made as to whether students with disabilities participate. In Texas, the ARD committee is given that responsibility. ARD committees are charged with making the decisions to support individualized education of students with disabilities. However, training in appropriate practices for making decisions about the participation of students with disabilities in assessments is felt to be needed. There is some concern that the ARD committee members need more guidelines for how to implement the criteria for deciding who should participate, that they may act to exempt when in doubt, or that they may be overly benevolent in exempting students from tests because of a lack of assessment options.

Participation in Assessments:
Issue 4. Students with disabilities in unique settings (e.g., separate schools, institutions) are routinely excluded from state assessments.

Students who attend schools in unique settings such as institutions, other residential placements (e.g., school for the deaf), and alternative campuses may not be included in TAAS. When results are drawn for analysis and review by grade level or only from traditional schools, many students are not on the initial list from which names are drawn. Even when all students are tested, these students typically are left out.

Participation in Assessments:
Issue 5. Exemption rules are applied differently across settings, and adherence to exemption guidelines is not monitored.

The guidelines for decision-making about the participation of students with disabilities in TAAS may be applied differently in different home campuses or districts, and this results in variation in the proportions and kinds of students who are exempted from TAAS. When this happens, comparisons among home campuses and districts are invalidated. Currently the accountability system in place does not determine what strategies ARD committees use to determine whether a student is exempted from taking the TAAS.

However, a number of system safeguards are used to ensure that student performance is properly measured. The system safeguards include the analysis of TAAS/Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) consistency, few students tested, and audits of non-tested students, including audits for "excessive" ARD exemptions. (PEIMS is a system used to track student enrollment and participation in special programs.) The audit process compares the number of special education students exempted from the TAAS administration by the local ARD committee to the number of students receiving special education services. Further inquiries are conducted only if the number exempted from any of the TAAS tests administered is greater than the number of students served in special education programs.

Participation in Assessments:
Issue 6. The lack of adequate accommodations or alternative assessment systems keeps many students with disabilities from participation in state assessments.

All of the good intentions about participation in state tests go awry if, for reasons of disability, students are unable to participate in testing. Some students simply cannot participate in testing unless accommodations are made or an alternative assessment system (e.g., portfolio systems) is available. In Texas, there currently are many modifications allowed during the administration of TAAS. However, there is no alternative system for measuring the performance of students who cannot take TAAS, even with modifications.

Participation in Assessments:
Issue 7. There are questions about whether decisions about participation should differ as a function of the severity of disability or the category of disability.

The *project focus group* felt that different assumptions underlie decisions made about who is exempted from TAAS, and there are discrepancies in how the decisions are made. Some ARD committee members may believe that all students, including all students with disabilities, should participate in TAAS, with or without accommodations. Other members may believe that exemptions should be made for students with severe impairments or with specific kinds of disabilities. Some desire exemptions for all students of a specific category (e.g., emotionally disturbed, learning disabled). There is, of course, little agreement about which categories should be excluded. Finally, there is the belief that all students should participate in the Texas accountability system, and to do so, some, because of their category or severity of disability, will need to take alternative assessments instead of TAAS.

Participation in Assessments:
Issue 8. The reliability, validity, and appropriateness of many assessments are questionable for students with disabilities.

Technical concerns that arise when considering large-scale assessments include reliability, validity, and appropriateness. Validity is the major concern — does the instrument really measure what it is intended to measure? Although currently Texas includes students with disabilities in its field test of the TAAS, including students with disabilities, by itself, does not establish the validity of a test for a relatively small population of students. Sufficient numbers of students with disabilities need to be included to allow for analysis of their data separately. It is important to demonstrate that the items function the same (are not biased) for students with disabilities as for students in the general population (by examining item characteristic curves or percentage of students answering each test item correctly), and to look at the extent to which the structure of the test is the same for students with disabilities as it is for the students in the general populations (through factor analysis). A related issue is whether the TAAS is an accurate representation of the instructional program of some students (i.e. those receiving more nonacademic programs).

There are also concerns about the appropriateness of TAAS for students with disabilities who have not previously been included in the field tests (since participation is decided in the same way as during regular TAAS administrations). That is, participation may have been limited to types of abilities and/or disabilities during field testing. There is the potential of new students taking the test who demonstrate abilities/disabilities different from those students included in the original field test group. The need then arises to question whether the test is also appropriate for the types of students who were not part of the field test.

Accommodation Issues

When students with disabilities participate in assessments, accommodations may be needed to enhance their success. Certain modifications are allowable for students taking the standard state assessments and the end-of-course examinations. The text from the TAAS Coordinator Manual (Spring, 1995) is included in Appendix D with the exact modifications and circumstances stated. TEA considers other modifications on a case-by-case basis. Decisions about the use of modifications are made on an individual basis and take into consideration the needs of the student and whether the student receives that modification during classroom instruction. Modifications that would invalidate the test are not allowable.

Seven accommodation issues were identified by the focus group as relevant to current allowable accommodations for TAAS administration in Texas. These issues are listed here first, then each is discussed for clarification.

1. There is unwillingness to provide allowable accommodations.
2. Some people believe some accommodations give students an advantage over other students.
3. There is disagreement about what "reasonable accommodations" means.
4. Multiple issues exist related to each of the specific accommodations (e.g., extended time, reading aloud, Braille, use of calculators, word processors, scribes, tape recorders, etc., oral and/or sign language interpreting).
5. Controversy exists about whether the use of accommodations changes what is assessed.
6. There is disagreement about whether accommodations should be disability-specific.
7. There is concern about whether the same kinds of accommodations used in instruction should be used in assessments.

Issue 1. There is unwillingness to provide allowable accommodations.

In some districts and home campuses, accommodations in testing are not widely permitted. While accommodations are allowed in Texas and included in written guidelines, individual school personnel sometimes either believe they should not be provided, or are unwilling to provide them. A concern is that if students with disabilities are unable to take TAAS under the standardized (non-accommodated) procedures used with students who do not have disabilities, then they should not be taking TAAS. Certain accommodations are seen as potentially changing what the test intends to measure, thereby invalidating the results. Another complication is that some people are willing to provide accommodations for some conditions but not others, or for some students because of the severity of their disability.

Issue 2. Some people believe that accommodations give students an advantage over other students.

Because not all students use accommodations when they take TAAS, some people believe that the accommodations provide an unfair advantage to the students using them. Other people argue that accommodations provide the students using them with equity of opportunity to respond appropriately, that the accommodations enable students to reflect their true abilities or skills rather than providing an advantage. In essence, it is believed that accommodations produce a level playing field.

Issue 3. There is disagreement about what "reasonable accommodations" means.

In most states there is a call for making "reasonable" accommodations in assessment. But, what does "reasonable" mean? Is it reasonable to pay the costs of a separate administration? In Texas, written guidelines indicate that it is reasonable for a student to use a scribe, yet in Connecticut this accommodation is strictly forbidden in written guidelines. Just as different written guidelines of different states judge "reasonable" differently, so do individuals within one state, and even within a single ARD committee.

Issue 4. Multiple issues exist related to each of the specific accommodations (e.g., separate setting, reading aloud, Braille, use of calculators, word processors, scribes, tape recorders, oral and/or sign language interpreting).

It seems that each specific accommodation carries with it a set of practical and technical issues. Beyond the general issues that have been listed above, there are many issues related to specific types of accommodations. Some of these are: (1) Is it appropriate to read a reading test to a person with dyslexia or a related learning disability? (2) Are motivational prompts during a long assessment appropriate to provide for a student with an attention deficit or an emotional disability? The list of specific questions about accommodations could be quite lengthy.

Issue 5. Controversy exists about whether the use of accommodations changes what is assessed.

The validity of an assessment is an index of the extent to which it measures what it is supposed to measure. To be technically adequate, an assessment must be valid. It is considered critical to have the assessment measure what it says it measures. If an accommodation results in the assessment of something other than what the assessment purports to measure, then the validity of the results is questionable. The question of validity has been raised, for example, with respect to the Braille version of the TAAS offered in Texas. Braille is actually a specialized tactual code form of the written language. Tactual versions of print diagrams or pictures usually convey very different information to the student. When the concept of the test item is based on a picture, the validity of the Braille version is questionable because it potentially provides different information to the Braille-reading student than the information provided to a sighted student by a printed picture.

Issue 6. There is disagreement about whether accommodations should be disability specific.

In some states, accommodations that are allowed are based on the disability that the student exhibits. There are many questions about whether this is an appropriate approach to take, particularly given the acknowledged difficulty of differentiating among certain disability categories. In Texas, disability category is not included in written guidelines as a basis for making modification decisions. Yet there is anecdotal evidence that these decisions sometimes are categorically based.

Issue 7. There is concern about whether the same kinds of accommodations used in instruction should be used in assessments.

When instruction is provided to students with disabilities, teachers may provide accommodations that help the students to profit best from the instruction. They provide these accommodations during all aspects of instruction — when presenting information, when having students practice new skills, and when evaluating learning. In the allowable accommodations for Texas, instructional modifications are to be considered for the TAAS. However, some argue that because not all appropriate accommodations are provided during instruction, accommodations used during assessments should not be restricted to only those used in the classroom. Rather, selection of accommodations should be based on any allowable option that would improve student performance, whether or not it is currently used during instruction.

Reporting Issues

Seven reporting issues related to practices in Texas were identified by the focus group. Five are specific to accountability systems, while two are specific to state assessments. All are listed here first, then each is discussed for clarification.

Accountability

1. There are concerns about students whose assessment results are reported, but not included in the accountability system.
2. Some believe that the data for students with disabilities should be reported separately from the data for other students.
3. Categorical reporting of results by disability is desired by some but not others, and is seen as raising issues of confidentiality.
4. There are concerns related to reporting of results of students who are not attending their home campus.
5. There are questions about whether results, particularly regarding students with disabilities, are communicated in a way that is clear and easily understood.

Assessment

1. There is disagreement about whether data obtained when students use accommodations or alternative assessments should be reported separately from data obtained under standard assessment procedures.
2. There is a question about the kind(s) of scores (e.g., absolute scores or change in performance over time) that should be reported for students with disabilities.

Reporting Accountability:
Issue 1. There are concerns about students whose assessment results are reported, but not included in the accountability system.

When students with disabilities do take TAAS, their performances are reported back to school districts and home campuses, but the TAAS scores are not included in accountability reports. Rather, the only data on students with disabilities included in accountability decisions are data on dropout and attendance rates.

Reporting Accountability:
Issue 2. Some believe that the data for students with disabilities should be reported separately from the data for other students.

Currently, data on students with disabilities who take TAAS are reported separately from the data for other students. One justification for this is that the data then do not "contaminate" the data of general education students. In addition, it is recognized that the TAAS is not an appropriate measure for some students who, because of their significant cognitive disabilities, have different, more nonacademic curricula. Another justification for this is that data on students with disabilities are then available to inform policy and programming decisions. Because of the way that performance data on students with disabilities are reported (separately to the campus or district), there is no requirement that these data be looked at for making decisions, nor that they be publicly reported.

Reporting Accountability:
Issue 3. Categorical reporting of results by disability is desired by some but not others, and is seen as raising issues of confidentiality.

In general, opinions on this issue reflect on the usefulness of categorical special education. One criticism of providing data separately for different categories of disability is that it makes the erroneous implication that there are neat distinctions between different categories. One justification for separate reporting is that it provides data that can be used to inform policy and programming decisions. Those who argue against categorical reporting, particularly at the district or campus level, indicate concern that these reports for categories of small numbers of students (e.g., those with visual impairments) will violate confidentiality. There could be so few students that they will be readily identifiable. These data by category are not currently reported separately in Texas. As reporting requirements change, cat-

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egorical data should only be considered at a regional or state level to be used solely for planning or research purposes.

Reporting Accountability:
Issue 4. There are concerns related to reporting of results of students who are not attending their home campus.

Many students with disabilities attend schools other than their home school or district of residence. When this is the case, there is dispute about whether test results should be reported by the home school or the school the student attends. The debate is intensified when there are differences in curriculum across districts and the district of residence has little or no say in the curriculum provided by the district of attendance. This issue applies as well to students who are not on their home campuses, but are served on another campus within their districts.

Reporting Accountability:
Issue 5. There are questions about whether results, particularly regarding students with disabilities, are communicated in a way that is clear and easily understood.

Reports of testing results often are misinterpreted. A major issue in reporting is making certain that reports include clear information about the characteristics of the students who participated in the assessment. This becomes more complicated when students with disabilities are included. Current reports do include information about the numbers of students exempted from TAAS. Reports are available on how many students with disabilities took TAAS, but these are not part of the reports included in the accountability ratings.

Reporting Assessment:
Issue 1. There is disagreement about whether data obtained when students use accommodations or alternative assessments should be separated from data obtained under standard assessment procedures.

This issue is related to the accommodations issue on whether data obtained under accommodated assessments are measures of the same things as data obtained under standard test conditions. If the data are comparable, then one could argue that there is no need to separate the results for the two groups.

Reporting Assessment:
Issue 2. There is a question about the kind(s) of scores (e.g., absolute scores or change in performance over time) that should be reported for students with disabilities.

TAAS reports for non-special education student results typically have focused on both absolute scores of performance and changes in performance over time. The latter reports contribute to the determination of whether a school can receive an award through the Texas Successful Schools Award System. It is argued that increased participation of students with disabilities in the TAAS will disrupt the current examination of performance over time. Thus, it will be important to track both absolute scores and changes in performance over time for students with disabilities, and to factor these scores into consideration when looking at the progress in performance of schools over time.

Implementation Issues

Five implementation issues for the Texas assessment and accountability systems were identified by the focus group. All are listed here first, then each is discussed for clarification.

1. People do not want to have students with disabilities in assessment and accountability systems when those systems are used for high stakes purposes.
2. Attitude is a barrier to implementing assessment and accountability systems that include students with disabilities.
3. There are concerns about the resources needed to expand and implement the assessment and accountability systems.
4. There is concern about the alignment between state and federal statutes and expanded assessment and accountability systems.
5. There is concern that implementing an expanded statewide assessment and accountability system could do harm to students with disabilities.

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Issue 1. People do not want to have students with disabilities in assessment and accountability systems when those systems are used for high stakes purposes.

In some states, including Texas, the outcomes of statewide testing are used to develop a campus report card. The report card serves accountability purposes. The focus group reported that some districts may not want TAAS or alternative assessment results for students with disabilities included, because of a concern that this will be used to determine and possibly reduce the accountability rating of their campuses.

Issue 2. Attitude is a barrier to implementing assessment and accountability systems that include students with disabilities.

Members of the focus group report that a primary barrier to greater participation of students with disabilities in state assessments in Texas is a negative attitude. They indicate that practitioners in the field find the collection of the data on performance results of students with disabilities not only time consuming and difficult, but also feel the information collected is not used by district and campus decision makers and policymakers. The perception is reinforced if available data are excluded in the process of making decisions at the state level.

Issue 3. There are concerns about the resources needed to expand and implement the assessment and accountability systems.

Cost is a concern in the development and implementation of an expanded testing and accountability system. Major decisions must be made about the cost (monetary as well as other resources) versus benefit of accommodations or alternative assessment systems. With staffing limitations at the TEA, alternative resources need to be included in developmental activities. However, it should be noted that a significant amount of educational resources support special education students in the public schools. The Texas legislature has determined that there needs to be greater accountability for the use of those funds in improving performance of students with disabilities.

Issue 4. There is concern about the alignment between state and federal statutes and expanded assessment and accountability systems.

State laws, rules, and regulations about assessment and accountability systems are ever changing. Senate Bill 1 requires that the assessment and accountability systems in Texas will expand and change to include students who are currently exempt from state assessments. There is concern that there must be safeguards to ensure that any changes do not inadvertently conflict with federal nondiscrimination statutes and regulations.

Issue 5. There is concern that implementing an expanded statewide assessment and accountability system could do harm to students with disabilities.

Some parents in Texas, especially parents of students with severe disabilities, do not want their children exposed to statewide assessments. It is thought that the IEP is intended to take care of the charting of progress of these students toward accomplishment of IEP objectives, accounting for the results of their educational experiences. Other parents do want their children to participate in statewide assessments, in order for them to experience testing situations and be a part of the accountability system. Both parents and educators have expressed concern about the potential negative impact on students over the continued use of the TAAS, administered with or without modifications, in the absence of more appropriate options.

ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING AN ACTION PLAN FOR TEXAS

Nine assumptions that underlie the recommended action plan for Texas were identified by the focus group. Five of the assumptions relate primarily to the accountability system and four assumptions relate primarily to assessments. The assumptions are listed here, then discussed below.

Accountability

1. All students should be included in one comprehensive accountability and reporting system to ensure that the mission, goals, and objectives of public education are met.

2. An accountability system should be fair and recognize the diversity of students in Texas' school population.
3. A comprehensive accountability system should be subject to continuous improvement while ensuring longitudinal consistency.
4. When students with disabilities participate in a state accountability system, there will be greater focus on improving results, and expectations for their performance will increase.
5. The successful implementation of an expanded accountability and assessment system is directly dependent on the professional development supporting it.

Assessment Assumptions

1. It will be necessary to provide some students with disabilities with reasonable accommodations so they can participate in assessments.
2. A small percentage of students with disabilities (especially those with significant disabilities or those in a different curriculum) need alternative assessment procedures.
3. It will be necessary to provide alternative assessments for students whose participation in general state assessments is not appropriate.
4. An expanded assessment system that includes students with disabilities must comply with federal and state nondiscrimination regulations.

Accountability Assumption 1.
All students should be included in one comprehensive accountability and reporting system to ensure that the mission, goals, and objectives of public education are met.

The mission, goals, and objectives of public education in Texas are for all students in the system. We cannot know whether these are being met if the performance of only part of the student population is reported. This is true whether an educational system adopts an inclusive philosophy or not. By including reports on the performance of only part of the population, we get inaccurate information, especially if there are differences among educational units in the extent of participation. Since the passage of Public Law 94-142, access to a free appropriate public education has been the right of every child with a disability. It is difficult, at best, to ensure that the purpose of this law is being met unless there is a comprehensive accountability system for the results of education for all students.

Accountability Assumption 2.
An accountability system should be fair and recognize the diversity of students in Texas' school population.

Increasingly, students in today's Texas public schools are becoming more diverse in their characteristics. The APA *Standards for Tests and Assessments* reinforces the importance of recognizing the diversity of students in today's schools when assessments are developed, to reduce the possible introduction of bias. If an accountability system is not fair it will, over time, become increasingly less appropriate for greater numbers of students. An unfair system, however, is inappropriate for any student.

Accountability Assumption 3. ***A comprehensive accountability system should be subject to continuous improvement while ensuring longitudinal consistency.***

Over time, there will be major advances in assessment technology. The Texas accountability system must be dynamic (it must allow for revisions). At the same time, trends and comparisons are important. The balance between continuous improvement of an accountability system and stability for longitudinal comparisons is a tenuous one at best. Still, it is important to continually address this issue, and to determine when decisions need to tip the balance one way or the other.

Accountability Assumption 4.
When students with disabilities participate in a state accountability system, there will be greater focus on improving results, and expectations for their performance will increase.

When an individual is held accountable for certain things, those things become more important than those for which the individual is not held accountable. Likewise, when district and campus ratings are based on the progress of every student in every classroom, there will be greater focus on the learning and progress of all students. This is the reasoning behind incentive systems like that of the TAAS and the Texas accountability system. All students should count equally in the calculations that are the bases for recognitions and awards if all students in the education system are to benefit from the intended consequences of an incentive system.

Accountability Assumption 5.
The successful implementation of an expanded accountability and assessment system is directly dependent on the professional development supporting it.

Like many other innovations and changes in education and other domains, the critical stakeholder buy-in and support is dependent on the participation of informed stakeholders in decision-making. For these things to happen, there must be adequate and appropriate professional development. This is true in the area of assessment and accountability, just as it is in the area of instructional techniques. It is also important to involve parents along with educators in this professional development. Good evidence of the importance of professional development comes from recent events in Britain, where teachers who did not understand the assessment system and were not adequately trained about it were successful in overturning the implementation of the system.

Assessment Assumption 1.
It will be necessary to provide some students with disabilities with reasonable accommodations so they can participate in assessment.

Just as some students need accommodations to participate in instruction, so do some students need appropriate accommodations to participate in state assessments in Texas. This notion has been supported for some time by most states, and recently, by the national education data collection system. It is not clear how many students may need accommodations. It has been estimated that approximately 85% of students with disabilities could appropriately participate in regular assessments, either with or without accommodations. The frequency with which accommodations have been implemented in each state is unknown. In a follow-up study of exclusion from NAEP, the National Academy of Education (in press) found that approximately 85% of students with disabilities could be tested with NAEP or a comparable assessment.

Assessment Assumption 2.
A small percentage of students with disabilities (especially those with significant disabilities or those in a different curriculum) need alternative assessment procedures.

It is generally recognized that some students in Texas schools have disabilities that are so severe that they cannot participate in the regular assessment, but need an alternative assessment instead. In Kentucky, where the accountability and assessment programs were developed simultaneously in the massive court-ordered educational reform, it was found that less than 1/2 of one percent of all students needed an alternative assessment. This probably translates to less than 20% of students with disabilities, much below the average of 50% of students with disabilities typically excluded from statewide assessments.

Assessment Assumption 3.
It will be necessary to provide alternative assessments for students whose participation in general state assessments is not appropriate.

It will take time to develop alternative assessments. It is best to develop them over time, with adequate field testing. Among some of the considerations for undertaking the development of an alternative assessment are:

- What are the criteria by which a student will be allowed to participate in the alternative assessment?
- Should there be a standard set or state-approved list (i.e. comparable to what is done for LEP students in Texas) of alternative assessments? What allowance will need to be made for students with disabilities that preclude the use of standard assessments (e.g. portfolios)?
- Who will be responsible for determining that a student meets the identified criteria for participating in the alternative assessment?
- Should limits be placed on campuses or districts for the number or percentage of students allowed to take the alternative assessment?
- What are the implications for graduation and receiving a diploma for those students participating in the alternative assessment system?

- Should the performance standards for the alternative assessment be correlated to TAAS, so that the results from the two systems can be aggregated, or will they be kept on separate scales? If aggregated, are the scores from both systems equally weighted?
- Who will score the alternative assessment? Does there need to be alignment between the scoring rubrics for all forms of assessment?
- Will the alternative assessment system reflect the same educational standards as the regular assessment system, or will a different set, or a select subset, of standards be used?
- How will alternative assessments be aligned with the essential knowledge and skills for the foundation curriculum? How should this be evaluated for students under different curricular programs (e.g. basic life skills, community-based instruction)?
- How is progress, as indicated on the Individual Educational Plan, related to an alternative assessment system? Does it play a role in measuring educational success for this subset of students? How will the alternative assessments be incorporated into the state's Results-Based Monitoring System?

Assessment Assumption 4.
An expanded assessment system that includes students with disabilities must comply with federal and state nondiscrimination regulations.

At least two Federal laws probably have an impact on how students with disabilities are treated in a statewide assessment: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, Public Law 101-336). Recent federal legislation for educational reform (*Goals 2000*), elementary and secondary education (*Improving America's Schools Act*), and transition to work (*School to Work Opportunities Act*) support the tenets in Section 504 and ADA. The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (*IDEA*) now being considered for reauthorization requires participation of students with disabilities in statewide assessments. Furthermore, in Texas the new requirements in the Texas Education Code will take precedence in ensuring that an expanded assessment system is considered.

AN ACTION PLAN FOR TEXAS

Focus group members worked in groups, and solicited input from their constituents throughout the state on possible actions to take in Texas toward the goal of developing a comprehensive assessment and accountability system that includes students with disabilities. In generating the action plan, the focus group first addressed each issue individually, giving consideration to what could be done immediately, what needed to be done in the future, and what were the research needs. All recommendations then were considered together so that redundancies could be eliminated. After actions were identified by issue area (participation, accommodation, reporting, implementation), all identified strategies were categorized into one of three components: ***networking, research, and development***. The ***development*** strategies were further subdivided into *assessment, policy, reporting, and training*. The detailed action plans are on the pages that follow, with information provided for each strategy on the rationale for the strategy, suggested approaches that might be taken, where responsibilities might be placed, possible products, and a suggested timeline. A separate list is included for resource contact persons for agencies or organizations recommended for collaborative work. Below is an outline listing of the strategies included in the action plan:

Networking

- Annually update information on other states' guidelines for participation, accommodations, and reporting. (N1)
- Track findings of legal cases regarding issues in participation in assessments and use of testing accommodations. (N2)
- Track ongoing state and federal research on issues on participation, accommodation, and reporting of the performance of students with disabilities in state and national assessments. (N3)
- Track development and modification of participation and accommodation guidelines at the national level. (N4)
- Maintain relationships with and use established links with state education agency personnel in other states to address assessment issues. (N5)

Research

- Conduct an assessment study of students with disabilities who are exempted from TAAS during the Spring 1996 administration. **(R1)**
- Annually review the unintended consequences of including students with disabilities in state assessment and accountability systems (e.g., retention in grade, over-referral for testing, dropouts). **(R2)**

Development:
Assessment

- Build an alternative assessment system for students with disabilities who cannot participate in the standard state assessment, even with modifications. **(DA1)**
- Continue to include students with disabilities in the development of any future state assessments and any revisions of the current TAAS. **(DA2)**
- Utilize a panel of practitioners who serve on a continuing basis as an advisory group to many of the strategies in this action plan. **(DA3)**

Development:
Policy

- Develop guidelines for deciding the kind of assessment (standard, modified, or alternative state assessment) to be taken by students with disabilities, and track adherence to the guidelines. **(DP1)**
- Review existing Texas accommodations guidelines; modify these as necessary, and track adherence to the guidelines. **(DP2)**

Development:
Reporting

- Determine how results for students with disabilities will be included in the assessment component of the Texas accountability system, (including reporting of the numbers of students who were exempted from assessments) and in all published or unpublished reports of results. **(DR1)**
- Phase in a requirement to report results for all students in district or state assessment/accountability reports. Results should be reported for all students with disabilities. Results should be coded by category, but results should never be reported by category for state accountability reports. Regional and state data by disability may be completed for program research purposes only. **(DR2)**
- Assign responsibility for reporting scores to the student's district of residence and home campus. **(DR3)**
- Report both absolute scores and change in performance scores for all students. **(DR4)**
- Phase in a requirement to report on the progress of all students in any rating or recognition system set up for campuses or districts. **(DR5)**
- Develop descriptions of the reporting system (specified in second reporting strategy) for use by the media, parents, and school district personnel. **(DR6)**

Development:
Training

- Provide training or continuing education to ARD committee members, including parents, in making decisions about participation of students with disabilities in assessments, appropriate accommodations, and assessment options. **(DT1)**
- Provide training on data reporting, analysis, and interpretation for campus/district improvement planning. **(DT2)**

A crosswalk of critical issues and action plan strategies is provided in **Exhibit 5** to demonstrate that every strategy included in the Recommended Action Plan addresses at least one of the issues that was identified for Texas, and that every issue identified for Texas has been addressed by at least one strategy in the action plan. A depiction of possible timelines suggested in the table is provided.

RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

Strategy	Rationale	Approach	Responsibility	Product	Timeline
NETWORKING					
N1. Annually update information on other states' guidelines for participation, accommodation, and reporting.	It is important to track other states' advances in participation, accommodation, and reporting guidelines, and other assessment practices (e.g., graduation exams). This information can be used in periodic updates of Texas guidelines, and will eliminate the need to duplicate efforts of others.	• Obtain summary documents of other states' guidelines on participation, accommodation, and reporting (e.g., several National Center on Educational Outcomes documents) and other state practices (e.g., report by the North Central Regional Education Laboratory and the Council of Chief State School Officers). • Request annual updates. • Obtain actual documents from the states as needed; determine comparability to district size, student count, etc.	Collaboration among TEA personnel in accountability, student assessment, and special education	• Summary of issues and updates of state guidelines, policies, and practices • Tracking of assessments used to make high school graduation decisions	Begin immediately; continue each year
N2. Track findings of legal cases regarding issues in participation in assessments and use of testing accommodations.	There are numerous legal issues related to testing participation and accommodations. Collaboration with organizations and individuals who regularly track legal issues in assessment would eliminate the need to duplicate the effort.	Work in collaboration with these legal experts to stay informed of the findings in legal cases regarding issues in participation in assessments, testing accommodations, and reporting of results.	Collaboration among TEA personnel in assessment, accountability, special education and legal	• Information on court cases and latest legal findings related to participation, accommodations, and reporting of assessment results	Begin immediately; continue each year
N3. Track ongoing state and federal research on issues in participation, accommodation and reporting results of the performance of students with disabilities in state and national assessments.	Many groups and agencies are currently conducting research on issues in participation, accommodation, and reporting. Rather than duplicate this research, track the efforts of these projects and evaluate their application to Texas, as well as comparability to district size of student population.	• The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), is funding investigations of technical issues in including students with disabilities in state assessment systems. • The Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) is funding State Departments of Education to conduct research on the development of state assessment programs, and some of these will study including students with disabilities and limited English proficiency.	A collaborative effort of special education, student assessment, accountability, and policy, planning, and research personnel	• List of findings from the research on assessment • Evaluation of applicability to Texas' issues	Ongoing 1996-2000 school years

RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

Strategy	Rationale	Approach	Responsibility	Product	Timeline
N4. Track development and modification of participation and accommodation guidelines at the national level.	The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) have developed, and are regularly refining, guidelines for including students with disabilities in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). It is important to follow the activities of these groups because their guidelines often serve as the basis for guidelines developed by states.	Interact with personnel at the NCES and NAGB to track the development and modification of guidelines for making decisions about participation of students with disabilities in NAEP, and guidelines for deciding what accommodations to provide.	• TEA-appointed liaison to the national groups • An advisory panel of practitioners, including psychometricians, appointed to identify technical implications of accommodations and application of national guidelines for including students with disabilities to Texas efforts	Occasional reports to TEA personnel	Ongoing, beginning Fall, 1995
N5. Maintain relationships with established links with State Education Agency personnel in other states to address assessment issues.	Rather than operate in isolation when addressing important issues in participation, accommodations, and reporting, it makes good sense to invest a small sum of money and time to establish working relationships among states.	The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), in collaboration with the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO), is forming a collaborative State Collaborative on Student Assessment and Standards (SCASS) that will focus on issues in including students with disabilities in state assessments. Texas has applied for membership.	• TEA representative on the SCASS • Continuing collaboration of student assessment, accountability, and special education	SCASS products Results of pilot studies conducted in SCASS member states Collaborative problem solving	Applied for membership, Summer, 1995 Ongoing

RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

Strategy	Rationale	Approach	Responsibility	Product	Timeline
RESEARCH					
R1. Conduct an assessment study of students with disabilities who are exempted from TAAS during the Spring 1996 administration.	Many students with disabilities who have been exempted from TAAS could participate without accommodations, others could participate with accommodations, while still others need an alternative assessment system. It is important to document the actual numbers of students who are in each group, and to examine regional variability in numbers. Previous studies conducted should be reviewed.	• TEA should issue an RFP to fund a collaborative effort among 3 to 5 Education Service Centers (ESCs), geographically representative of the whole state, to conduct an assessment study which includes sample groups of students in their regions. The procedures for the study should replicate those used by American Institutes for Research (Palo Alto, CA) in the NAEP follow-up study conducted for the National Academy of Education. • The successful bidder should investigate (1) whether these students can take the standard state assessment, (2) what it would take to document the results of educating these students, and (3) the number of students who were exempted because accommodations were not available. Student data elements should be clearly identified prior to testing. • Additional studies should be conducted on future tests following the original study.	Collaborative effort by 3 to 5 ESCs, with one ESC serving as fiscal agent and project leader	Research report on assessability of students with disabilities who are exempted from TAAS during Spring 1996 testing Background information for writing guidelines on participation and accommodations in assessment	Annual reporting on future tests Completed and report filed by August, 1996

RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

Strategy	Rationale	Approach	Responsibility	Product	Timeline
R2. Annually review the unintended consequences of including students with disabilities in state assessment and accountability systems (e.g., retention in grade, over-referral for testing, dropouts).	The expectation that greater participation of students with disabilities in assessments will lead to more students achieving higher level outcomes may not actually happen. It is important to track the system for unintended consequences.	Track the occurrences of grade retention, referrals for testing, and dropout rates among students with disabilities. Follow up studies done in previous years.	Collaborative effort of TEA personnel in student assessment, accountability, and special education	Report on change in number of students taking state assessments and data on unintended consequences Analysis of the consequences of an expanded system of accountability	July, 1996 Annual updates

RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

Strategy	Rationale	Approach	Responsibility	Product	Timeline
DEVELOPMENT - ASSESSMENT					
DA1. Build an alternative assessment system for students with disabilities who cannot participate in the standard state assessment, even with modifications.	It is clear that some students with disabilities will need to demonstrate their mastery of curricular objectives through alternative assessment. It is important to develop an assessment system for these students.	• TEA should issue an RFP for development of an alternative assessment system during 1995-96. Data from networking and research activities in this action plan should serve as input information. • Systems in place in other states should be studied and replication, with or without modification, should be considered. The panel of experts from DA3 could serve as an advisory group for this activity. • Use a multi-year phase-in process. Pilot system during 1996-97; Benchmark during 1997-98. Full implementation in 1998-99.	Collaborative effort of TEA personnel of student assessment, accountability, and special education Advisory panel	Alternative assessment system for students who are unable to participate in the standard state assessment	Include the TAAS follow-up study (1996) Pilot data complete by end of 1996-97; benchmark data complete by 1997-98; implementation by 1998-99
DA2. Continue to include students with disabilities in the development of any future new state assessments and any revisions of the current TAAS.	A major source of exclusion of students with disabilities from assessments is their exclusion from the sample when assessments are developed, resulting in inappropriate items (in format and/or level) for students with disabilities. Participation of these students during development enables test developers to spot items that do not work for these students or that need to be adapted so they can work, and to identify areas needing adapted tests or new alternative tests.	• Students with disabilities should continue to be included in item tryouts and in the standardization of any new state assessments. • Item characteristic curves should be generated and alternative methods for scaling should be considered, similar to what is now occurring for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) • The advisory panel (see DA3) could advise and assist in this effort.	Collaborative effort of personnel from special education, student assessment, accountability, and policy, planning and research Test Developers Advisory Panel	Tests that are sensitive to the needs of students with disabilities, and tests that students with disabilities can take	Ongoing

RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

Strategy	Rationale	Approach	Responsibility	Product	Timeline
DA3. Utilize a panel of pratitioners who serve on a continuing basis as an advisory group to many of the activities in this action plan.	Many of the issues to be addressed are very technical in nature (e.g., the effect on validity when using accommodations); the assistance of specially trained personnel is needed.	Utilize a panel of practitioners, at least two of whom should have expertise in assessment of students with disabilities.	Commissioner of Education	Panel of experts who can provide advice on implementation of strategies in this action plan	Immediately

RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

Strategy	Rationale	Approach	Responsibility	Product	Timeline
DEVELOPMENT - POLICY					
DP1. Develop guidelines for deciding the kind of assessment (standard, modified, or alternative state assessment) to be taken by students with disabilities, and track adherence to the guidelines.	ARD committees need specific guidelines for deciding the kind of assessment a student takes. Guidelines will ensure statewide consistency in appropriate use of assessment options. Both training and tracking are necessary to ensure appropriate and consistent decision making.	• Review existing written materials related to participation in assessment (see documents from the National Center on Educational Outcomes). These documents should be stepping-off points for those who develop the guidelines. • In developing decision-making criteria, it will be helpful to develop methods for deciding when an assessment is "appropriate." • Communicate the guidelines to ESCs, LEAs, and ARD committees, including parents.	Collaborative effort of personnel in special education, student assessment, accountability, and policy, planning, and research, with field input	Set of guidelines for use by ARD committees in making decisions about the appropriate assessment for a student with disabilities Consistent decision-making practices	Begin development concurrent with design of assessment options (alternative assessment system not ready until 1998-99)
DP2. Review existing Texas accommodation guidelines; modify these as necessary, and track adherence to the guidelines.	A consistent set of guidelines is needed to make accommodation decisions. Even with guidelines, decision-making may be inconsistent. Both training and tracking are necessary to insure consistent decision making.	• Review existing written materials related to use of accommodations in assessment (see documents from the National Center on Educational Outcomes). • Include decision-making criteria for deciding when an accommodation is "appropriate." • Communicate the guidelines to ESCs, LEAs and ARD committees, including parents.	Collaborative effort of personnel in special education, student assessment, accountability, and policy, planning, and research, with field input	Set of guidelines for use by ARD committees in making decisions about appropriate accommodations for a student with disabilities Consistent decision-making practices	Immediate and on-going

RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

Strategy	Rationale	Approach	Responsibility	Product	Timeline
DEVELOPMENT - REPORTING					
DR1. Determine how results for students with disabilities will be included in the assessment component of the Texas accountability system (including reporting of students who are exempted from assessments) and in all published or unpublished reports of results.	Students with disabilities should be included in all aspects of the Texas accountability system, including state assessments. Senate Bill 1 requires that results for students with disabilities must be reported by 1998-99. Until then, districts continue to report only the numbers exempted.	• Determine reporting system which include a format for results on standard TAAS, TAAS with modifications, and alternative assessments. • The currently required reporting of exemptions will serve as a transition to the new system.	Collaborative effort of personnel in special education, student assessment, accountability, policy, planning, and research, with field input	Report format of performance results for all Texas school children, regardless of type of assessment, beyond information on the numbers of students exempted from testing	Immediate
DR2. Phase in a requirement to report results for all students in district or state assessment/ accountability reports. Results should be reported for all students with disabilities. Student results should be coded by category, but results should never be reported by category for state accountability reports. Regional and state data by disability category may be compiled and evaluated for program and research purposes only.	By reporting results for students in the manner described, a complete set of data will be available for the decision-making process. Differentiating students into disability categories is not appropriate, and the small numbers of students in some categories means that if their results are reported, confidentiality is an issue.	• Results should be reported in the following five columns: (1) results for all students, (2) results for all students except those with disabilities, (3) results for students with disabilities who took the standard test, (4) results for students with disabilities who took a standardized modified version of the standard test, and (5) results for students with disabilities who took an alternative test. • Students' results should be coded by characteristics so that results can be analyzed and statewide numbers can be analyzed only for research purposes.	Collaborative effort of personnel in special education, student assessment, accountability, and policy, planning. and research, with field input	Reports that include a set of results of the performance of all students, and that provide differentiated information for students who took tests under differing conditions	In place by August, 1998

RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

Strategy	Rationale	Approach	Responsibility	Product	Timeline
DR3. Assign responsibility for reporting scores to the student's district of residence and home campus.	There should be a consistent system of reporting results. Given that many students attend school outside their districts, debate arises about who should report. The focus group thought it best to have the district of residence and home campus report.	Develop a reporting system in which all students who are residents of a district are included in any and all district and home campus reports, regardless of where they actually attend school.	Collaboration of TEA personnel in student assessment, accountability, and special education, with field input	System in which school districts report the test results for all of the children of parents who reside in the district, including students who attend school in other settings An accountability system in which there is responsibility for all students	Immediately
DR4. Report both absolute scores and change in performance scores for all students.	There is a need for information about both kinds of scores.	The existing Texas Learning Index is a way to track change in performance over time. Report performance results for students with disabilities within this index.	Collaborative effort among student assessment, accountability, and special education personnel in TEA	Reporting system that includes comparable results for all students	Beginning 1996-97
DR5. Phase in a requirement to report on the progress of all students in any rating or recognition system set up for campuses or districts.	A major concern has been that schools do not want to report results of the performance of students with disabilities because it has a negative effect on ratings or recognition. Ratings or recognition should be contingent on reports of the performance of all students.	• Review this requirement as it relates to the intent of Senate Bill 1. • Phase in this requirement. Considerable consideration will need to be given to how the performance of students with disabilities fits into the current rating system.	Collaborative effort of special education, student assessment, accountability, and policy, planning, and research personnel at TEA with field input	Clear descriptions of the results that are reported by school districts and the state	In place by August, 1998

RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

Strategy	Rationale	Approach	Responsibility	Product	Timeline
DR6. Develop descriptions of the reporting system (specified in DR2) for use by the media, parents, and school district personnel.	To avoid misuse of the new system, it is critical to provide all who may need to use or interpret the information with very specific descriptions of the reporting system.	A collaborative group should be assigned the job of writing a description of the information included in the reports of test results for local school districts.	TEA personnel in assessment, accountability, and special education, with field input	Clear descriptions of the results that are reported by school districts and the state	In place by August, 1998

RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

Strategy	Rationale	Approach	Responsibility	Product	Timeline
DEVELOPMENT - TRAINING					
DT1. Provide training or continuing education to ARD committee members, including parents, in making decisions about participation of students with disabilities in assessments, appropriate accommodations, and assessment options.	As new or revised guidelines are developed, it is important to provide the training necessary to implement them. ARD committee members need additional training if they are to make these decisions.	• ESC personnel could develop training modules on: a) making decisions about participation of students with disabilities in assessments b) making appropriate accommodations, and c) selecting appropriate assessment options. • An important component should be that the purpose of accommodations is not to provide an advantage, but to enable students with disabilities to demonstrate their skills.	Education Service Centers (or one ESC using distance learning capabilities to provide statewide training) in collaboration with TEA staff	Training modules: • participation • accommodation • assessment options	Begin development immediately and complete during the 1996 to 1998 academic years
DT2. Provide training on data reporting, analysis, and interpretation for	As new data are produced that include students with disabilities, it will be important that campuses and districts understand what is reported, possibilities for analysis, and how the data can be interpreted to contribute to their plans for improvements.	ESC personnel develop training modules : • data reporting • analysis • interpretation • use of data for campus/district improvement planning.	Education Service Centers, (or one ESC using distance learning capabilities, to provide statewide training) in collaboration with TEA staff	Training modules: • data reporting • analysis • interpretation • use of data for campus/district improvement planning	Begin development during 1996 and complete during the 1996 to 1998 academic years

RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

RESOURCE CONTACTS FOR RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

NETWORKING - Strategy 2
Michigan State University - Dr. Susan Phillips

NETWORKING - Strategy 3
OSEP - David Malouf
OERI - David Sweet

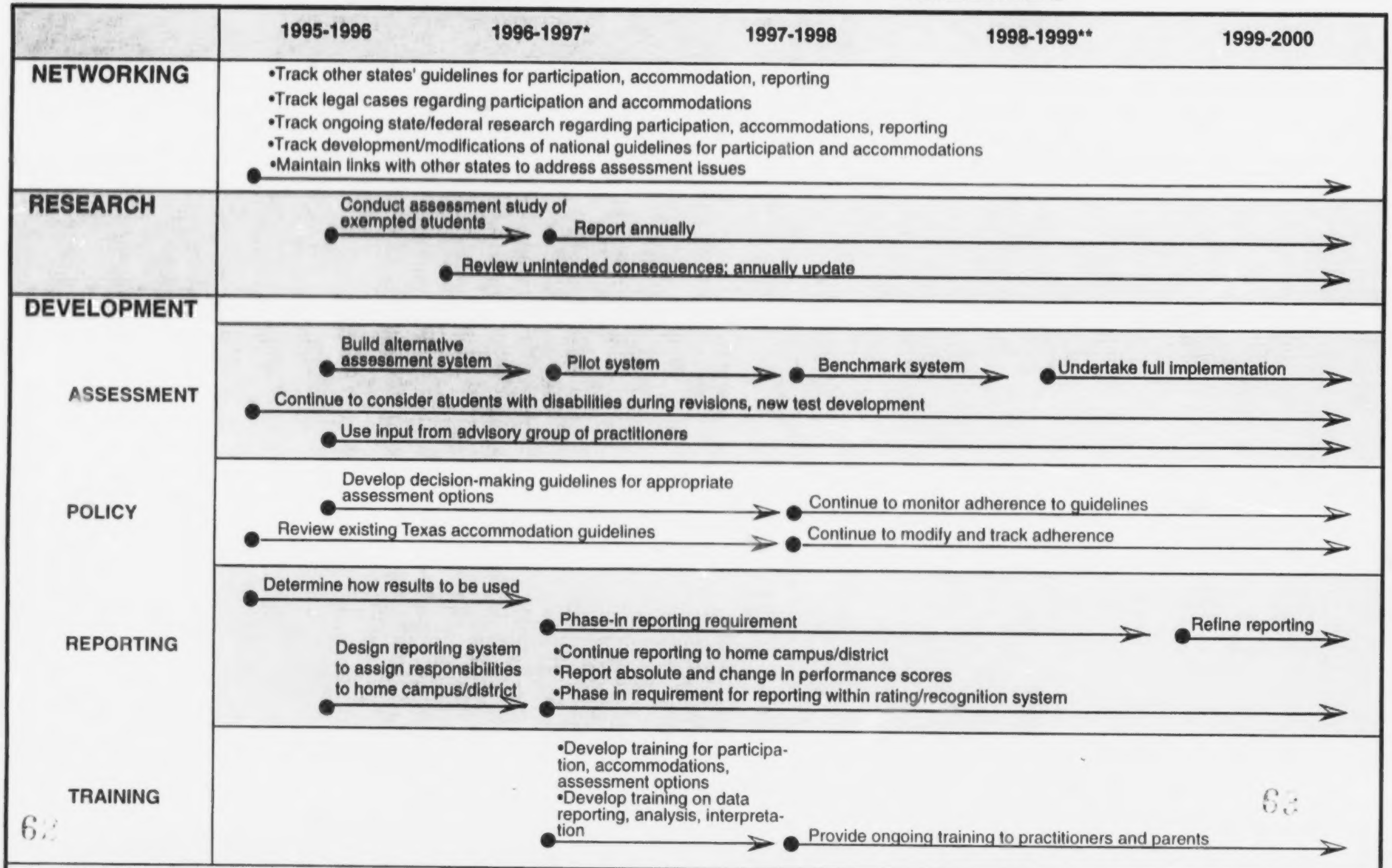
NETWORKING - Strategy 4
NCES - Sharif Shakrani
Jim Houser
NAGB - Ray Fields

NETWORKING - Strategy 5
CCSSO - Ed Roeber
NCEO - Jim Ysseldyke

RESEARCH - Strategy 1
NAEP - George Bohrnstedt

DEVELOPMENT - *Assessment* - Strategy 2
NAEP - Bob Linn, University of Colorado
NCEO - Kevin McGrew - University of Minnesota

RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN - TIMELINES



NETWORKING

- Track other states' guidelines for participation, accommodation, reporting
- Track legal cases regarding participation and accommodations
- Track ongoing state/federal research regarding participation, accommodations, reporting
- Track development/modifications of national guidelines for participation and accommodations
- Maintain links with other states to address assessment issues

RESEARCH

Conduct assessment study of exempted students

Report annually

Review unintended consequences; annually update

DEVELOPMENT

ASSESSMENT

Build alternative assessment system

Pilot system

Benchmark system

Undertake full implementation

Continue to consider students with disabilities during revisions, new test development

Use input from advisory group of practitioners

POLICY

Develop decision-making guidelines for appropriate assessment options

Continue to monitor adherence to guidelines

Review existing Texas accommodation guidelines

Continue to modify and track adherence

REPORTING

Determine how results to be used

Phase-in reporting requirement

Refine reporting

Design reporting system to assign responsibilities to home campus/district

- Continue reporting to home campus/district
- Report absolute and change in performance scores
- Phase in requirement for reporting within rating/recognition system

TRAINING

- Develop training for participation, accommodations, assessment options
- Develop training on data reporting, analysis, interpretation

Provide ongoing training to practitioners and parents

**By December 1996, Commissioner must develop and propose assessment system for evaluating the progress of exempted students

**By 1998-99, performance of those students must be included in AEIS, School Report Card, Performance Report
[Senate Bill 1, Section 39.027, May, 1995]

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

It is recognized many of the recommended strategies and approaches in the action plan will require significant investments. To develop an alternative assessment and to consult with other states already working on the issues that Texas must address will be very time intensive. Funds will be needed to conduct research, and personnel time will be required to oversee activities at the state level and at the district level. Additional resources (consultants, scoring assistance, time, etc.) will have to be considered as well.

Required Resources

Networking. Most of the networking strategies call for tracking of the activities of others and keeping up-to-date on developments in the statewide assessment of students. It would be necessary for TEA to assign specific employees to regularly track designated activities and developments, and obtain copies of technical reports and other products from the centers and agencies listed. Collaborating with other states will require both personnel time and some investment in collaborative efforts (e.g., membership in SCASS). At this time, Texas has applied for membership in the SCASS.

Research. Research strategies included in the action plan would involve commitment of fiscal resources and personnel. The first activity calls for a study of students exempted from TAAS during the spring 1996 administration. If personnel in the various regions were to be used to coordinate the assessment of the students, costs could be minimized. The second research strategy, an annual study of the unintended consequences of assessment systems, would require formation of a group and some member of the group conducting an annual survey, as well as costs for materials, postage, and additional analyses.

Development. The development strategies call largely for the development of an alternative assessment system that includes policies, guidelines, and training. It is anticipated that development of the guidelines would need to be an agency-wide collaborative effort and would need to include a system to monitor implementation. While this is clearly the most costly development strategy, this has been done by other states, and it will be worth investigating piggy-backing on their efforts, or working collaboratively with other states on the development.

Training will also require some initial and continued investment. Without training on decision guidelines and policies, it is anticipated that districts and home campuses will continue to struggle with implementation of assessment practices. With such guidelines and the training necessary to implement them, it is anticipated that significant advances could be made in the successful implementation of assessment systems in which all students participate.

Return on Investment

Return on investment is not necessarily best represented by a breakdown of the benefit of each type of strategy. The most important return, of course, is that systematically implementing the recommended action plan will meet the mandate of the Texas Education Code (Senate Bill 1, Section 39.027). By implication, it will make the Texas accountability system one that includes students with disabilities in performance measures as well as in the education process measures of attendance and dropout rates.

Networking. The benefit of tracking exercises is that TEA personnel would be able to stay aware of and profit from activities in other states and agencies. The benefit to Texas is significant. TEA personnel would profit from collaborative problem solving with other state education agencies. The cost of unilateral problem solving would be avoided, and Texas would profit from access to the results of studies carried out in other states.

Research. Proposed research activities are beneficial because they feed directly into decisions that Texas needs to make about its assessment and accountability systems.

Development. It is in the development activities (based on networking and research) that the major return on investment is evident. First and foremost, the development of an alternative assessment system meets the intent of Senate Bill 1. Furthermore, policy, reporting, and training strategies ensure the successful implementation of the revised accountability system.

Additional Determinations

The 74th legislature shifted the focus of the Texas public school system from a concentration on mandates to reliance on knowledge, planning, and accountability (Draft Long-Range Plan for Public Education,1996-2000, State Board of Education, September, 1995). One of the requirements of the new Senate Bill 1 (Section 39.027c) states that the performance of students who are currently exempt from state assessments must not only be measured under an assessment system, but also must be "included in the academic excellence indicator system (Section 39.051), the campus report card (Section 39.052), and the performance report (Section 39.053)" of the accountability system.

Since data for students with disabilities are included in a limited manner for the AEIS, the School Report Card and the Performance Report, interpretation will need to be made as to what additional data are to be included in these reports and how these results are to be used. Determination will need to be made regarding the intent of the Senate Bill 1 requirements in Section 39.027c as to the following:

1. What additional data for students with disabilities are to be included in the AEIS, the School Report Card, and the Performance Report that are not currently included as part of the reporting system?

2. How are assessment results for students with disabilities to be reported?

    - For those students who take the standard TAAS, will results be aggregated into the current non-special education student report?
    - For those students who take the TAAS with modifications, will results be aggregated or reported separately?
    - For those students who take alternative assessments, will those data appear as a separate report?

3. How are the assessment results for students with disabilities to be used in the accountability reporting system?

    - If the performance results are to be included in AEIS, is that to be done as a separate report as it is now or only as profile information?
    - Are the performance results intended to be used along with the results of non-special education students within the AEIS as the basis for accountability ratings and rewards?

As Texas continues to focus on public school excellence, equity, and efficiency through greater accountability, educational results for students with disabilities will also be part of the system. There is now an unprecedented opportunity to integrate current reform efforts with the development of new options. Including students with disabilities in statewide assessment and accountability systems should ensure the success and progress of all students served by the public school system in Texas.

EXHIBITS

EXHIBIT 1

Sources of Information for Focus Group

Initial Resources

When the focus group started its efforts, it began with a set of information, including a briefing paper, that was drawn from several previous efforts to identify some of the national issues related to the participation of students with disabilities in assessment, accountability, and testing systems. These sources included:

- Results of the annual surveys (1991 - 1994) of state accountability practices for students with disabilities conducted by NCEO.
- Results of a working session (Chicago, September, 1992) on barriers to putting new accountability practices in place, sponsored by NCEO and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), and attended by state assessment directors and state directors of special education.
- Papers on alternative ways to make decisions about participation and accommodation, written by experts in assessment and special education, and commissioned by NCEO.
- Results of a NASDSE Forum working session (August, 1994) on alternative accountability practices.
- Results of a working session (Washington, DC, March, 1994) of NCEO and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) on increasing the participation of students with disabilities in large-scale national assessments.
- Results of a working session (Tyson's Corner, May, 1994) of NCEO and state assessment personnel, sponsored by NCEO and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), on developing guidelines for inclusion of students with disabilities in statewide assessments.
- Contents of the NCEO "Setting State Assessment Guidelines for Students with Disabilities: A Study Guide."
- Proceedings of a NASDSE working session (Salt Lake City, February, 1995) on a conceptual model for state accountability systems.

Related Documents

As appropriate, documents related to current national and state reform efforts were provided to focus group members during the course of the project. These included:

- "Struggling for Standards," Education Week Special Report, April, 1995. A user's guide to the national education standards movement, including the activities of 50 states.

- "Outcomes: Watch Your Language" (Ysseldyke and Thurlow, 1994). A clarification of ways in which the word "outcomes" is used and why we must be careful in using appropriate terms.

- "Special Education Testing Study Inconclusive," Education Daily, June, 1995. A review of federal exclusion study in New York and the concern for determination of participation rates for students with disabilities in state assessments.

- "Don't Test, Don't Tell," (Zlatos, November 1994). The American School Board Journal. A description of "academic redshirting" to define exclusion of students with disabilities from state assessments.

- "Surveying the Landscape of State Education Assessment Programs," Council for Educational Development and Research. Includes profiles of state assessment.

- "High School Graduation Requirements: What's Happening for Students with Disabilities?" (Thurlow, Ysseldyke, Anderson; May, 1995). NCEO. Analysis of range of graduation requirements across all states.

- "A Compilation of States' Guidelines for Accommodations in Assessments for Students with Disabilities." (Thurlow, Scott, and Ysseldyke; March, 1995). NCEO. Listing of 38 states' guidelines on accommodations, modifications, and adaptations of assessments for students with disabilities.

Working Reference Materials

Resource documents directly related to the Texas assessment and accountability systems were provided for use by the focus group as reference material for the work of the project. Those included:

- Accountability Manual
- Glossary of AEIS
- Testing Appropriate Students — Texas Education Code
- TAAS Coordinator's Manual: Modifications for TAAS and End-of -Course Exams
- Excessive Exemptions Study (TEA)
- Proposed TEC Revisions/74th Texas Legislature/May 1995
- Alternative Assessment of Students with Languages Other Than English
- TAAS and End-of-Course Objectives/All Grades Tested
- TAAS Specifications
  a) 3rd Grade — Reading
  b) Exit Level — Reading, Writing, Math
- Senate Bill 1

EXHIBIT 2

Guide to Acronyms

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AEIS	Academic Excellence Indicator System
ARD	Admissions, Review and Dismissal
CCSSO	Council of Chief State School Officers
CEC	Council for Exceptional Children
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual Education Program
LEP	Limited English Proficient
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NASDSE	National Association of State Directors of Special Education
NCEO	National Center on Educational Outcomes
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
OERI	Office of Educational Research and Improvement
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs
PEIMS	Public Education Information Management System
RBM	Results-Based Monitoring
SCASS	State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards
TAAS	Texas Assessment of Academic Skills
TABS	Texas Assessment of Basic Skills
TEA	Texas Education Agency
TEAMS	Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills
TSSAS	Texas Successful Schools Award System

EXHIBIT 3

Glossary of Terms

Absolute Score — an actual test score, which is always an estimate, based on sampling of behaviors or skills, of what the test taker knows or can do

Accommodation — (other terms: adaptation, modification) an alteration in the way that a test is presented to or responded to by the person tested; includes a variety of alterations in presentation format, response format, setting in which the test is taken, timing or scheduling, as well as other possible changes (such as assessment in a different level from the standard)

Accountability — a systematic method to assure that those inside and outside of the educational system that schools are moving in desired directions; commonly included elements are goals, indicators of success toward meeting those goals, analysis of data, reporting procedures, and consequences or sanctions

Accountability Rating — a four point scale used to describe the performance of a campus in the Texas accountability system based on TAAS performance, dropout rate, and attendance; the four ratings are *exemplary, recognized, acceptable*, and *low-performing*. Schools earning either of the first two ratings are eligible for the Texas successful Schools Award System (TSSAS). Acceptable schools may be eligible for awards if they showed significant gains

Accreditation Status — a four point scale used to describe the performance of a district in the Texas accountability system based on TAAS performance, dropout rate, and attendance rate; ratings are *exemplary, recognized, accredited*, and *accredited, warned* (campuses in districts with this last rating cannot receive a TSSAS award)

Adaptation — (other terms: accommodation, modification) an alteration in the way that a test is presented to, or responded to by, the person tested; includes a variety of alterations in presentation format, response format, setting in which the test is taken, timing or scheduling, as well as other possible changes (such as assessment in a different level from the standard)

Alternative (Alternate) Assessment — an assessment that is different from one typically used; a different form of a test

ARD Committee — in Texas, a term for the Admissions, Review, and Dismissal Committee, which performs functions similar to those of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team; in Texas, this team determines whether a student participates in the TAAS, and what modifications the student may use during assessment

Assessment — the process of collecting data for the purpose of making decisions; in Texas this term usually refers to testing

Attendance — the total number of days students were present during the school year divided by the total number of days students were in membership during the same school year

Change Score — (other term: difference score) represents the difference between two scores; term implies that the difference represents a true change in performance; technically, additional considerations must be made to evaluate the "significance" of a difference, including the reliability of the difference, the rarity of the difference, and the psychological meaningfulness of the difference

Criterion Referenced Test — test that measures a person's development of particular skills in terms of absolute levels of mastery

Dropout Rate — for the Texas accountability system, the dropout rate is the number of dropouts summed across all grades, 7 through 12, divided by the number of students summed across all grades, 7 through 12. A dropout is defined as a student who is absent from the public school in which the student is enrolled for a period of 30 or more consecutive days, who does not hold a high school diploma or the equivalent, and whose attendance within that period at another public school or a private or parochial school cannot be evidenced

Exclusion from Testing — the act of barring someone from participation in an assessment program

Exemption from Testing— the act of releasing someone from a requirement to which others are held

Exit Exam — a test that must be taken and passed in order for a student to successfully leave some part of schooling, such as middle school (middle school exit exam); this term most often is used to refer to a high school graduation exam

Graduation Exam — a test that must be taken and passed in order for a student to earn a high school diploma

High Stakes Testing — assessment that has significant consequences for an individual or school system; for example, a high school graduation exam that is used to determine whether a student receives a diploma is a high stakes test for the student, whereas a benchmark exam that determines whether a school receives a financial reward is a high stakes test for the school

Large Scale Assessment — assessment of groups undertaken to describe a district, state, or nation

Minimum Competency Test — a test designed to determine whether a student has successfully mastered skills assumed to be the minimum possible to be considered as having gained necessary skills and knowledge in school

Modification — (other terms: accommodation, modification) an alteration in the way that a test is presented to or responded to by the person tested; includes a variety of alterations in presentation format, response format, setting in which the test is taken, timing or scheduling, as well as other possible changes (such as assessment in a different level from the standard)

Norm Referenced Test — test that compares an individual's performance to that of his or her peers; these tests are designed to discriminate among the performances of a number of individuals and to interpret how one person's performance compares to that of other individuals with similar characteristics

Performance Assessment — an exam that requires the student to create an answer or a product rather than simply filling in a blank or select a correct answer from a list; the task performed by the student is intended to be authentic

Portfolio Assessment — a type of performance assessment that uses a file or folder to contain collections of a student's work; the products typically depict the range of skills the student has or the improvement in a student's skill(s) over time

Promotion Exam — a test used to determine that a student has successfully mastered material to move to the next level of education

Reliability — the extent to which the same score is expected when (a) a student is measured at two different times, (b) two different samples of items are used, or (c) two different scorers judge performance

Standardized Test — test for which scores have been transformed so that the mean and standard deviation take predetermined values

Technical Adequacy — the goodness of certain characteristics of a test considered to be important, including standardization sample, reliability, and validity

Test Bias — the tendency of a test to not measure what it is said to measure because of systematic influences from inappropriate sources, such as ethnic background, gender, and disability

Texas Assessment of Academic Skills — a criterion-referenced test that measures student achievement in reading and mathematics at grades 3 through 9 and 10, and writing at grades 4, 8, and 10. The tests are given in the spring of each year

Texas Successful Schools Award System — incentive system to reward schools that exhibit high performance or the greatest progress in achieving state educational goals; in 1994, $5 million in awards were shared by nearly one thousand schools

Validity — the extent to which a test measures what it is said to measure; there are several types of validity (content, construct, criterion), depending on the procedure used to demonstrate what the test measures

EXHIBIT 4

Resources

This bibliography provides information on sources cited in this paper, as well as on other sources that are relevant to the topic of including students with disabilities in statewide assessment and accountability systems.

Allington, R.L., & McGill-Franzen, A. (1992). Unintended effects of educational reform in New York. Educational Policy, 6, (4), 397-414.

This article reports a significant increase in retention and identification of students for special education services during a period of increased high-stakes assessment from 1978 to 1989.

Bell, G. (1994). The test of testing: Making appropriate and ethical choices in assessment. Oak Brook, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.

This document addresses a myriad of topics related to choices that need to be made in relation to testing. In addition to general ethical assessment responsibilities, it addresses the selection and development of testing programs, preparing students for an assessment, administering the test, and interpretation and use of test results. Several issues are addressed in each of these areas.

Brauen, M., O'Reilly, F., & Moore, M. (1994). Issues and options in outcomes-based accountability for students with disabilities. Rockville, MD: WESTAT.

This document provides a framework for creating an outcomes-based accountability system that includes students with disabilities. It addresses issues and options for four decisions: (1) selecting outcomes, (2) establishing performance standards, (3) identifying assessment strategies, and (4) identifying accountable parties.

Briand, X. (1995, May 8). "National survey shows states exclude disabled from tests." Education Daily, 28 (88), 1, 3.

This article describes the results of a survey of state directors of special education in 37 states. In this description, Texas is reported to include 42 percent of its students with disabilities in the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS).

Clark, C. (1992). Accountability systems: A review of the literature. Texas Center for Educational Research. (This paper also appears as Chapter II in Volume II of A new accountability system for Texas public schools by the Educational Economic Policy Center, State of Texas.)

This report includes definitions of accountability and information on designing an accountability system.

Houser, J. (1994). Assessing students with disabilities and limited English proficiency (Working Paper 95-13). Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

This paper presents a summary of issues that have been addressed related to the inclusion of students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP. Major topics include: data validity and current policy; current status; data validity and alternative assessment; and next steps.

disabilities in national data collection programs. (Technical Report 2). Minneapolis, MN: National Center on Educational Outcomes.

This document presents an analysis of the degree to which individuals with disabilities are involved in national and state data collection programs. Recommendations for increasing the participation of individuals with disabilities are provided.

McGrew, K.S., Thurlow, M.L., & Spiegel, A.N. (1993). The exclusion of students with disabilities in national data collection programs. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 15, 339-352.

This article reports on the extent to which students with disabilities are excluded from our national data collection programs. Included are data collection programs in the Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Commerce, and the National Science Foundation.

National Academy of Education. (1993). The trial state assessment: Prospects and realities (Third Report of the National Academy of Education Panel on the Evaluation of the NAEP Trial State Assessment: 1992 Trial State Assessment). Stanford, CA: American Institutes for Research.

This document provides a comprehensive analysis of the state level administration and reporting of NAEP. Among the topics covered are the exclusion of students on Individualized Education Programs, including charts showing the rates of inclusion and exclusion by state.

NCEO. (1993). State special education outcomes 1992. Minneapolis, MN: National Center on Educational Outcomes.

This is an annual state report prepared by the National Center on Educational Outcomes. It reports on state activities in assessing the results of education for students with disabilities.

NCEO. (1995). State special education outcomes 1994. Minneapolis, MN: National Center on Educational Outcomes.

This is one of the annual state reports prepared by the National Center on Educational Outcomes. It focuses on state activities in assessing the results of education for students with disabilities, as well as including a special report on the status of students with disabilities in relation to Goals 2000 activities.

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. (1994). State student assessment programs database 1993-1994. Oak Brook, IL: NCREL.

This document presents the results of a survey of state assessment personnel that is conducted annually. It provides information on content areas covered, grade levels assessed, types of assessments, and so on for many additional variables.

Office of Technology Assessment. (1992). Testing in American schools: Asking the right questions. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

This document examines technological and institutional aspects of educational testing. It provides a broad view of a range of issues related to testing and accountability.

Phillips, S.E. (1994). Legal implications of high-stakes assessment: What states should know (Regional Policy Information Center Report). Oak Brook, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.

This report was written to "help state and national education policymakers avoid legal challenges to their student assessment programs." It does so by explaining the relevant legal and psychometric issues.

Thurlow, M.L., Scott, D.L., & Ysseldyke, J.E. (1995). Compilation of states' guidelines for including students

disabilities in assessments (Synthesis Report 17). Minneapolis, MN: National Center on Educational Outcomes.

This report compiles the written laws, regulations, and guidelines that states have on the participation of students with disabilities in statewide assessments and includes a summary of the major themes and trends.

Thurlow, M.L., Scott, D.L., & Ysseldyke, J.E. (1995). Compilation of states' guidelines for accommodations in assessments for students with disabilities (Synthesis Report 18). Minneapolis, MN: National Center on Educational Outcomes.

This report compiles the written laws, regulations, and guidelines that states have about the use of accommodations in statewide assessments. It includes a summary of the major themes and trends in the written accommodations guidelines.

Thurlow, M.L., Shriner, J., & Ysseldyke, J.E. (1994). Students with disabilities in the context of educational reform based on statewide educational assessments. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

This is a paper that was presented at AERA to summarize the status of statewide assessments in terms of the participation of students with disabilities, the accommodations that are allowed, and the nature of written guidelines.

Ysseldyke, J.E., Christenson, S.L., & Thurlow, M.L. (1993). Student learning in context model project (Final Report). Minneapolis, MN: Department of Educational Psychology.

This final report of a federally funded project describes a model intervention to support all students with disabilities in general education classrooms. It addresses the difficulties in bringing about change in schools, and in generating responsibility for students with disabilities among all educators.

Ysseldyke, J.E., & Thurlow, M.L. (1994). Guidelines for inclusion of students with disabilities in large-scale assessments (Policy Directions No. 1). Minneapolis, MN: National Center on Educational Outcomes.

This policy report explains ways to include students with disabilities in large-scale assessments, use possible accommodations and adaptations, and monitor how well the intent of the guidelines is followed. Included are recommendations and a list of resources.

Ysseldyke, J.E., Thurlow, M.L., & Anderson, C.L. (1995). High school graduation requirements: What's happening for students with disabilities? (Synthesis Report 20). Minneapolis, MN: National Center on Educational Outcomes.

This report summarizes and analyzes current state graduation requirements and how they are applied to students with disabilities. Variability from one state to another is demonstrated.

Ysseldyke, J.E., Thurlow, M.L., & Geenen, K. (1994). Implementing of alternative methods for making educational accountability decisions for students with disabilities (Synthesis Report 12). Minneapolis, MN: National Center on Educational Outcomes.

This report on a seminar of state special education directors and state assessment coordinators from six states examines the challenges of collecting data to make accountability decisions for students with disabilities. Recommendations for future practice are provided.

Ysseldyke, J.E., Thurlow, M.L., & Shriner, J.G. (1994). Students with disabilities and educational standards: Recommendations for policy and practice (NCEO Policy Directions 2). Minneapolis, MN: National Center on Educational Outcomes.

Four kinds of standards are explained in this report along with the merits and limitations for three alternative perspectives on setting standards and the issues educators face when setting appropriate standards for all students. Also included are recommendations for policy and practice for both content standards and performance standards.

Zlatos, B. (1994). Don't test, don't tell. The American School Board Journal, 181 (11), 24-33.

This article describes the "academic red-shirting" phenomenon, suggesting that this and similar practices skews the way we rank our schools. It is suggested that some schools succumb to a temptation to make their scores look artificially good, resulting in children being left out of tests.

EXHIBIT 5

Crosswalk of Issues and Action Plan Strategies

	Action Plan Strategy																			
Issue	**N1**	**N2**	**N3**	**N4**	**N5**	**R1**	**R2**	**D A1**	**D A2**	**D A3**	**DP 1**	**DP 2**	**DR 1**	**DR 2**	**DR 3**	**DR 4**	**DR 5**	**DR 6**	**DT 1**	**DT 2**
Participation																				
Accty																				
P1						•	•		•	•			•	•			•			
P2													•	•	•		•		•	
Asmt																				
P1	•	•	•	•	•	•				•	•		•						•	
P2						•					•		•	•					•	
P3						•					•								•	
P4							•	•	•		•				•			•		
P5						•					•	•	•	•					•	
P6	•	•	•	•	•			•			•	•								
P7					•						•			•						
P8			•		•				•	•										
Accommodation																				
A1	•	•		•								•							•	
A2	•	•	•	•	•					•									•	
A3	•	•	•	•	•														•	
A4		•	•		•					•										
A5		•	•		•					•										
A6	•				•					•										
A7	•				•					•									•	
Reporting																				
Accty																				
R1					•		•						•		•		•			•
R2					•								•	•						•
R3					•					•				•	•			•		•
R4					•										•		•	•		•
R5																		•		•
Asmt																		•		
R1					•									•				•		•
R2																	•	•		•
Implementation																				
I1		•			•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•			•		•	
I2						•													•	•
I3							•			•									•	
I4		•																	•	•
I5			•			•													•	

EXHIBIT 6

States' Estimates of the Percentages of Students with Disabilities Participating in Statewide Assessments of Academic Achievement

< 10 Percent	10 - 24 Percent	25 - 49 Percent	50 - 74 Percent	75 - 90 Percent	> 90 Percent
Colorado Florida Georgia Louisiana Michigan Minnesota Missouri New Mexico North Dakota Washington Wisconsin Guam	Kansas Palau	California Connecticut Hawaii Idaho Illinois Iowa Oregon Tennessee Texas District of Columbia CNMI Puerto Rico	Delaware Massachusetts New Jersey New York Rhode Island South Carolina South Dakota	Indiana Maine North Carolina American Samoa	Kentucky Maryland

EXHIBIT 7

States' Self-Reported Decision Rules for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in Statewide Assessments

STATE	Local Decision	Student Specific Characteristics	Level of Service Received	Time in General Education	Other
Alabama	●			●	●
Alaska	●	●	●		
Arizona	●				●
Arkansas	●		●		
California			●		
Colorado			●		
Connecticut	●				
Delaware	●	●	●		●
Florida					●
Georgia					●
Hawaii				●	
Idaho	●			●	
Illinois	●				●
Indiana				●	●
Iowa	●	●		●	
Kansas	●				●
Kentucky					●
Louisiana	●				●
Maine	●	●			●
Maryland					●
Massachusetts	●		●	●	●
Michigan	●			●	
Minnesota		●	●	●	
Mississippi	●		●	●	
Missouri	●			●	●
Montana	●	●			
Nebraska					
Nevada					●
New Hampshire					
New Jersey		●		●	●

STATE	Local Decision	Student Specific Characteristics	Level of Service Received	Time in General Education	Other
New Mexico	●		●		
New York		●			
North Carolina	●	●			
North Dakota	●	●		●	●
Ohio	●				
Oklahoma					
Oregon	●	●	●		
Pennsylvania	●			●	
Rhode Island	●		●	●	●
South Carolina		●			
South Dakota	●				
Tennessee	●				
Texas	●	●	●	●	●
Utah		●			
Vermont	●				
Virginia	●	●	●		
Washington	●				●
West Virginia	●	●	●	●	●
Wisconsin	●				●
Wyoming	●	●			
Am Samoa	●		●	●	●
BIA					●
DC	●	●	●		●
Guam				●	
CNMI					
RMI					
Palau					●
Puerto Rico		●			
USVI	●				

EXHIBIT 8

States' Self-Reported Accommodations Allowed in Statewide Assessments

STATE	Accommodation Type					Alternate Presentation					Alternate Response			
	Flexible Time	Alternate Presentation Mode	Flexible Setting	Alternate Response Mode	Other	Braille	Oral Reading	Sign Language	IEP Determined	Large Print	Computer	Oral Response	Sign Language	IEP Determined
Alabama	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Alaska		✓		✓		✓		✓	✓					✓
Arizona	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Arkansas	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
California		✓								✓				✓
Colorado		✓				✓				✓				
Connecticut	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Delaware		✓				✓		✓		✓				
Florida	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Georgia	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hawaii	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Idaho	✓	✓							✓	✓				
Illinois	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Indiana	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓				✓
Iowa														
Kansas	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Kentucky	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Louisiana	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maine	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maryland	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Massachusetts	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Michigan	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	✓				✓
Minnesota														
Mississippi	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Missouri	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓					✓
Montana														
Nebraska														
Nevada	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
New Hampshire	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓					✓
New Jersey	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

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STATE	Accommodation Type					Alternate Presentation					Alternate Response			
	Flexible Time	Alternate Presentation Mode	Flexible Setting	Alternate Response Mode	Other	Braille	Oral Reading	Sign Language	IEP Determined	Large Print	Computer	Oral Response	Sign Language	IEP Determined
New Mexico	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
New York	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
North Carolina	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
North Dakota	✓		✓	✓			✓					✓		✓
Ohio	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Oklahoma		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Oregon	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pennsylvania	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rhode Island		✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓			
South Carolina	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
South Dakota		✓				✓		✓		✓				
Tennessee	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓					✓
Texas	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Utah		✓								✓				
Vermont					✓									
Virginia	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Washington	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
West Virginia		✓		✓					✓					✓
Wisconsin	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wyoming														
Am Samoa	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓				✓	✓	
BIA		✓		✓			✓		✓					✓
DC				✓										✓
Guam		✓		✓		✓		✓					✓	
CNMI														
RMI														
Palau	✓	✓					✓							
Puerto Rico	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓		✓		
USVI														

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Project Description

Introduction

Region IV Education Service Center (ESC) received a six-month grant from the Texas Education Agency in April 1995 to facilitate the development of :

a) a critical issues document leading to the inclusion of students with disabilities in the statewide assessment and accountability system, and
b) a recommended action plan for the Texas Education Agency.

The issues were studied by a representative statewide group of stakeholders who had an interest in examining educational results for all students. The plan was developed in relation to the identified issues, and within the context of current educational reform in Texas.

Goals/Objectives

In order to ensure that all issues critical to inclusion of students with disabilities were considered, the following major goals and objectives for the project were outlined:

Goal I: To establish a network of support among statewide stakeholders in the identification of critical assessment issues.

Objective 1: To secure the active participation of a representative statewide sample of stakeholders in the development of critical issues.

Objective 2: To ensure input representative of the needs of students with all types of disabilities, as well as be reflective of the diverse characteristics of the state of Texas.

Goal II: To develop recommendations for the implementation of an inclusive accountability system for Texas.

Objective 1: To collaboratively work with both the Texas Education Agency and the stakeholder group to address current issues and recommended guidelines for:
- participation (exclusion versus inclusion)
- accommodations and adaptations
- reporting results
- incentives for including students with disabilities
- identification and reduction of barriers

Objective 2: To develop a working document for dissemination which outlines a recommended action plan for the state to approach the identified issues.

Methods/Activities

The Region IV ESC staff utilized a facilitation approach to the proposed project. Dr. James Ysseldyke and Dr. Martha Thurlow of the National Center on Educational Outcomes for Students with Disabilities (NCEO) at the University of Minnesota agreed to a formal collaborative effort with this project. The Region IV ESC staff, consisting of representatives of both general and special education, served as facilitators of the project. Continuing collaboration with the Texas Education Agency staff was critical as the Region IV ESC staff undertook the project activities for each identified goal and resulting objectives:

Goal I: Establish support network of statewide stakeholders

Objective 1: Secure representative statewide sample of stakeholders.

Activities:
1.a. All potential stakeholders groups statewide were contacted indicating the purpose of the proposed *project focus group* to be selected, goals/ objectives/activities to be accomplished, time

commitment required, and timelines to be met. Advocacy groups, professional organizations, and other appropriate parties were asked to nominate individuals who could best articulate their perspective as representative stakeholders for the *project focus group*.

• Each representative was selected to participate, and was required to have regular communication with their organization/constituency to communicate the process of the *project focus group* as the work progressed.

• Organizations invited to nominate representatives for the *project focus group* included:

Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education
Texas Association for Learning Disabilities
Texas Council for Exceptional Children
Texas Education Agency - Divisions for Accountability and Special Education Programs (including representatives for low incidence populations)
Governor's Continuing Advisory Committee for Special Education
Institutions of Higher Education
Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association
Texas Association of Secondary School Principals*
Texas Mental Health/Mental Retardation Authority
Texas Association of School Administrators
Texas Association of School Boards
Texas Association of Supervisors and Curriculum Directors
Texas School for the Deaf
Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired*
Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities

** Organization not able to identify representative who could commit to the compressed time schedule of the project.*

1b. Alternative avenues for input were established for the following entities:

Advocacy Inc.
The ARC of Texas
Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities

Regular communication, meetings, and/or opportunities for input of information and feedback were provided to these advocacy groups.

Ongoing meetings were conducted at the Texas Education Agency with personnel from special education; student assessment; accountability; policy, planning, and evaluation; and legal to review the progress of the *project focus group*, discuss issues, and receive input from TEA staff.

Objective 2: To ensure representative input through *project focus group*

Activities

2a. In consultation with the Texas Education Agency, Region IV ESC ensured that all groups contacted included representation of the interests of all disability groups through the inclusion of professional organizations as well as advocacy groups.

2b. Cluster representation (e.g. multiple ESC service areas) from the major geographic areas of the state was used to attempt to coincide with the school population density within each section of the state. An attempt was made to ensure that each area of the state had no greater representation of the project focus group than the percentage of the school population of the state represented by that area (e.g. Region IV ESC represents a school population of approximately 20-25% of Texas).

2c. The gender and ethnic make-up of the *project focus group* was analyzed for diversity representative of the school population in Texas. This was accomplished during the nomination process and was stated as part of the nomination criteria.

GOAL II: Develop recommendations for inclusive accountability system

Objective 1: Address current issues and recommended guidelines

Activities:

1a. Region IV ESC staff worked with Drs. Ysseldyke and Thurlow to prepare a draft of critical issues in statewide assessment of students with disabilities. The NCEO consultants met regularly with Region IV ESC staff to determine the framework for the initial discussion draft, to refine the issues specific to Texas, to evaluate the progress ofproject activities, and to prepare the resulting document for dissemination.

1b. Region IV ESC personnel held a set of *project focus group* meetings to review the identified issues and determine generalization best fit to the Texas educational system. Ysseldyke and Thurlow met with members of the *project focus group* for an initial 2-day meeting during the first week of June 1995. Along with Region IV ESC staff as facilitators, the consultants walked the groups through a tentative set of issues and discussed rationale for the inclusion of each issue.

1c. The *project focus group* met as a study group for three additional meetings during June, July, and August to focus on each specific issue. Interim contacts were made via Tenet, fax, and/or telephone as needed. NCEO consultants were included in additional meetings and met with project staff for further study and detailed development of the product document.

- A collaborative approach was taken for development of the issues and assumptions, utilizing Group Systems V. Group Systems V is a computer-supported collaboration tool that allowed for simultaneous and parallel processing for group interaction. The system allowed for idea generation, organization, consensus-building, record keeping, and decision-making .

- The goal of each study session was to enable all members to evaluate issues, select among all options under consideration, and to consider each issue within the context of the Texas systems of assessment and accountability.

- Action plan items were generated for each issue. These were eventually collapsed, reviewed for duplication, and finalized into categories of recommended actions.

Objective 2: To develop recommended action plan

Activities

2a. The report preparation phase was accomplished as a collaborative effort between Region IV ESC staff, serving as the project facilitators, and the NCEO consultants. Working together to produce the comprehensive final report, the consultants and staff submitted drafts of the working document to the *project focus group*, advocacy groups, and TEA staff for critique and input. Differing perspectives were considered for the ongoing revisions to the final document.

2b. The initial drafts were submitted to the *project focus group* for review and suggestions prior to preparation of the final version in September 1995. Dissemination was restricted to this group during this phase of the project.

2c. Final document preparation and dissemination to the Texas Education Agency was completed by September 29, 1995. Further dissemination and potential subsequent uses will need to be determined by the Texas Education Agency.

Project Timelines and Activities

Date	Activity
April 5	Notification of project award
April 7	Contact with National Center for Educational Outcomes for Students with Disabilities (NCEO) - Dr. Jim Ysseldyke - Dr. Martha Thurlow
April 10-13	Development of outline for briefing paper for initial discussion
April 21	Conference with NCEO re: outline, meeting dates, purpose of meetings, agendas, process of development of project goals/ objectives
April 24-May 4	Development of briefing paper, initial meeting agenda, documents for nomination of *project focus group* (stakeholder group) representatives
May 4-10	Nomination by organizations of *project focus group* representatives
May 12	*Project focus group* members selected and notified
May 15	Review and edit of discussion document
May 17	Meeting in Austin with TEA staff (accountability, assessment, legal, special education, and evaluation); presentation of project plans
May 18	Distribution of briefing paper to *project focus group* to review prior to first meeting
May 25-26	Initial meeting in Houston of *project focus group*; initial development of critical issues
May 30	Meeting in Austin with TEA staff; presentation of briefing paper for input; discussion of critical issues under consideration
June 5	Conference with NCEO; refined work of *project focus group*; plan for subsequent meeting of group

Project Timelines and Activities

Date	Activity
June 5-26	Continued refinement and communicated with stakeholder group members
June 26-27	Meeting in Houston with *project focus group*; continued development of critical issues and assumptions (info made available to the field via Tenet)
June 29	Meeting in Austin with TEA staff; shared critical issues, assumptions for input
June 27-July 10	Communication of *project focus group* members with constituents for input; continued feedback and refinement of critical issues; request for input for action plan (info made available to the field via Tenet)
July 10	Meeting in Houston of *project focus group* to finalize critical issues with constituent input; complete development of action plan recommendations
July 11	Conference with NCEO; input incorporated into issues; draft format to be used for final action plan
July 25	Conference between NCEO and Region IV ESC project staff to revise project document, identify adjustments needed re: constituent input
July 27	Meeting in Austin with TEA for input re: final critical issues and assumptions, initial action plan development
July 27	Meeting in Austin with advocacy group to update on all project activities, review action plan development
August 8	Meeting in Houston of *project focus group* to incorporate constituent input and address action plan development
August 9	Region IV ESC project staff and NCEO meeting to revise action plan format, revise document draft re: input received
August 8 - Sept. 7	Refine action plan input from *project focus group* members, advocacy group, TEA staff

Project Timelines and Activities

Date	Activity
August 15	Meeting in Austin with TEA staff to review draft of action plan for input recommendations
August 15	Meeting in Austin with advocacy group to review current document draft and solicit input for draft of action plan
August 29	Meeting in Austin with TEA staff to review revised draft of project document for input
September 7	Region IV project staff and NCEO consultants meeting to determine construct revisions for final draft
September 12	Meeting in Austin with TEA staff to review major construct revisions to be completed, get additional input re: technical issues
September 15	Conference with advocacy group re: construct revisions and solicit final input
September 8-29	Finalize document for technical soundness; edit for readability; ongoing communication with TEA, *project focus group*, advocacy groups
September 26	Meeting in Austin with Texas Education Agency staff for review of all revisions, input to final document for technical accuracy
September 29	Final document to Texas Education Agency

Appendix B

The National Context

A description of what is happening in national data collection programs in the United States, and in the statewide assessments of individual states within the U.S., reveals that many issues exist related to the participation of students with disabilities in assessments, in the use of accommodations, and in accountability for the results of education for students with disabilities. Presented here is a brief synopsis of some of what is known about the national picture.

National Data Collection

In 1990, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, funded the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) at the University of Minnesota to develop a conceptual model to guide the process of collecting data on educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Among its activities, NCEO worked with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to address ways to increase participation of students with disabilities in our nation's major educational data collection program, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

In the past, NAEP used fairly vague criteria to guide decisions about whether a student on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) participated in an assessment. NAEP did not allow the use of any accommodations. Under these conditions, approximately 65% of students with disabilities did not participate in NAEP (Houser, 1995). Furthermore, with the guidelines being used and the non-use of accommodations, states were found to be extremely variable in their rates of exclusion of students with disabilities (McGrew, Thurlow, & Spiegel, 1993). A study by the National Academy of Education (1993) found that the ranking of states would change if states had equivalent exclusion rates. To alleviate the difficulties associated with variable exclusion rates, and to have a data collection program that included more students with disabilities, in 1995 NAEP field-tested a new set of decision criteria for who should take NAEP, and for the first time, allowed the use of several different accommodations during assessment. As recent as September, 1995, the decision was made to include students with disabilities in the 1996 NAEP on mathematics. Large enough samples of students with disabilities will be obtained to conduct adequate bridging calculations, and to explore the use of accommodations during the administration of NAEP.

State Assessment Participation

State tests, for the most part, have been in place a number of years. Initial research conducted by NCEO on state practices in assessing students with disabilities indicated that most states did not know the extent of participation of students with disabilities in their statewide assessments. For those states that did know, most had extremely low percentages of participation (0 - 25%).

Participation Issues

In asking about participation of students with disabilities in assessment, NCEO found that the answer depended on who was asked and how the question was stated. When NCEO personnel asked special education and assessment personnel in the same state, different answers often were given. NCEO also found that the response differed when people were asked about participation in general and when they were asked about participation in specific tests (NCEO, 1995). In the years since that initial survey, most states have identified the participation rates of students with disabilities. How states fit into different ranges of participation rates is shown in Exhibit 1. Even though much progress has been made in participation rates during the past five years, there remains much variance in practice. Forty-three states are now using statewide assessments. Yet, in only one state (Kentucky) do all students participate in the assessment system. Maryland excuses only 1% of their total student population.

Recent analyses of guidelines for statewide educational assessments (Thurlow, Scott, & Ysseldyke, 1995a; Thurlow, Scott & Ysseldyke, 1995b; Thurlow, Shriner, & Ysseldyke, 1994) indicate that most states now have written guidelines for participation and accommodation decisions. The self-reported rules used by states (as of 1993) to make decisions about the participation of students with disabilities in assessments are shown in Exhibit 6.

States are struggling with how to provide assessment and accountability systems in which students with disabilities participate. These struggles are giving way to debates about the kinds of accommodations that must be made to enable students with disabilities to participate. There is considerable variance in state efforts to date. Some states have large documents detailing accommodations that can be made; in others, accommodations are not provided, or accommodations are used but results are discounted and eliminated from the reporting system (Ysseldyke & Thurlow, 1994).

Exclusion

Exclusion can occur at three levels. The first level is *during test development*. Often, the needs of students with disabilities are not considered when tests are developed, nor are students with disabilities included when the tests are standardized. When this happens, it limits the number of items in the test that are appropriate for use with students with disabilities and the appropriateness of normative comparisons. Second, exclusion can occur *at the time that the tests are administered*. This is the most commonly thought of point of exclusion, and includes anecdotal exclusions such as the special education class that is sent on a field trip on test day, or the individual student who is encouraged to stay at home on a particular day to avoid the disheartening experience of taking the statewide assessment. Part of the issue of exclusion at the time of testing involves whether accommodations are allowed during the administration of an assessment. Many students are excluded from an assessment when a needed accommodation is not provided or allowed.

The use of accommodations in state testing is an area in which there has been much change within the past two years. Initial research conducted by NCEO on state guidelines for allowable accommodations for students with disabilities indicated that many different approaches were being taken, some of which were in contradiction to others. For example, at that time, Tennessee, unlike many other states, prohibited the provision of extended time. Georgia specifically prohibited the interpretation of directions, while nine other states allowed this accommodation. Nearly all states had a reference to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) in their accommodation guidelines. The self-reported accommodations allowed by states (as of 1993) are shown in Exhibit 3.

The third level at which exclusion occurs is in the *reporting of results*. Students with disabilities sometimes are tested, but then their scores are not reported. In some states, the test protocols of students with disabilities are destroyed. Of the 24 states with participation guidelines that address reporting of results for students with disabilities, 14 indicate that the data from these students are not aggregated in data reports (Thurlow, Scott, & Ysseldyke, 1995a). In Oregon's guidelines, for example, it is noted that for students who take the statewide test under modified testing conditions, the tests will be scored and returned to the district, but will not be included in the school average. States can get quite detailed in describing what happens to data that are collected from students with disabilities. For example, in 1994, North Dakota had the following guidelines for reporting:

1. If the student is mainstreamed in 50 percent or more of the core courses being tested,. . . the student's test results are to be included in class, grade, district, and state averages.

2. If the student is mainstreamed in less than 50 percent of the core courses, . . . the student's test results are not to be included in class, grade, district, and state averages.

3. If a student who has an IEP does not take all sections of the test, or if the student takes the test under other than standard testing procedures, . . . the student's test results should not be included in the class, grade, district, and state averages (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 1994, p.1).

Other states include more of their students with disabilities in reports. Kentucky aggregates and reports all data from students with disabilities and students without disabilities at the home school level, regardless of where the student is educated (Thurlow, Scott, & Ysseldyke, 1995a).

Consequences

Besides the variations in how states report results from statewide assessments, there are variations in the extent to which performance on tests has consequences for districts, schools, school personnel, and students. Student consequences typically involve withholding or awarding a high school diploma (or promotion from one grade or level of schooling to another). Currently, 17 states use assessments to decide whether a student receives a graduation diploma, and 2 additional states are preparing to begin using graduation exams in the next two years. How students with disabilities fit within this system varies considerably among those states with graduation exams (Thurlow, Ysseldyke, & Anderson, 1995). In 10 of the 17 states, students with disabilities must pass the graduation exam in order to receive a standard diploma. In these states, if the student with a disability completes coursework (including, in some states, modified coursework) but does not pass the exam, a certificate is awarded, the same as for all students. In the other states, the student with disabilities may be exempted from the exam and still receive a standard diploma.

Research has confirmed many unintended consequences of these types of assessments. For example, Richard Allington and Anne McGill-Franzen (1992) investigated the effects of high-stakes testing on students with disabilities. Students in New York state take examinations at periodic intervals, and data on their performance are used to make comparisons among districts. Districts report the percentages of their students who pass the benchmark examinations. Allington and McGill-Franzen challenged the data from the third grade exams put out by schools, data indicating that in excess of 90% of third graders consistently were passing the benchmark tests. The authors obtained data on nine-year-olds (the typical third-grade age), and a very different picture resulted. In some instances the percentage of students passing dropped into the mid 60s. They found that many nine-year-olds had been retained in second grade or placed in special education. When the scores of these students were entered into scores for school districts, comparisons among districts changed.

The practice of excluding students from assessments has been referred to as "academic red shirting." In an article that appeared in the American School Board Journal, Zlatos (1994) described a New York community school that received a national award for educational excellence, based in part on its high test scores on the state's third grade achievement test (96 percent of the school's students passed the test). A closer look at the data revealed that many of the school's kindergarten through second grade students had been retained in grade or placed in special education. The scores of these students were not included in the school's average score. Quick calculation indicated that if these students had been included, the school's pass rate would have dropped from 96 to 78 percent. Zlatos showed that there are major differences among school districts in the numbers of students with disabilities who are included in assessments. Percentages of overall enrollment in grades tested varied from 66% to 93%. No one has a good estimate of the corresponding percentages of students with disabilities.

When differing numbers of students and students with different characteristics (e.g., learning disability, limited English proficiency) are excluded from district assessments, comparisons among districts are invalid. Zlatos reached the following simple conclusion:

> Mix up the variation from state to state and district to district in the type of tests and norms used, the grade levels tested, the amount of time spent on test preparation, or the time of the year the test is taken . . . toss in the difference of the number of students excluded, and test scores become a witch's brew of incongruous ingredients. Accountability vanishes. (p. 25)

Several federal laws that have been enacted within the past few years have implications for state accountability systems. Federal funds associated with the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, the Improving America's Schools Act (formerly the Elementary and Secondary Education Act), and Goals 2000: Educate America Act are tied to state assessments that include all students.

In the spring of 1995, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) issued a request for proposals to fund up to four projects designed to study technical issues related to including students with disabilities in state assessments. The Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) also has issued a call for proposals from state and local education agencies to develop assessment systems, with a priority on systems that include students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency. NCEO is working with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to form a State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) that will address the complex issues in participation of students with disabilities in large-scale assessments. A SCASS already exists on assessing students with limited English proficiency.

Summary

In the past, the division between general and special education created dual systems, each accountable for its own results. In most states, compliance monitoring was the assessment and accountability system for special education, while the outcomes of general education, if assessed, were assessed by examining pupil performance on standardized tests. This approach fails to give a uniform picture of how all students are doing. An accountability system that includes all students can be achieved, regardless of whether students with disabilities are served in separate placements or within general education classrooms.

Appendix C

Resource Documents

- *Results-Based Monitoring for Special Education, Benchmark 1994-95*, Texas Education Agency, December, 1994

- *State Plan for Fiscal Year 1994-1996 Under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*, Submitted by the State of Texas, Negotiated Revision with Addendum, July, 1995

- *Accountability Manual: The 1995 Accountability Rating System for Texas Public Schools and School Districts and Blueprint for the 1996-2000 Accountability Systems*, Texas Education Agency, Office of Policy Planning and Information Management, February, 1995

- *Long-Range Plan for Public Education, 1996-2000*, State Board of Education, Draft, September, 1995

- *Senate Bill 1 (Enrolled Version): Texas Education Code As Passed by the 74th Texas Legislature*, May, 1995

- *Senate Bill 1: Summary of Key Provisions in the New Texas Education Code*, Capitol Watch, Vol. I, Issue 8, Texas Association of School Administrators, June 1, 1995

- *Briefing Book on Senate Bill 1: 74th Texas Legislature*, Texas Education Agency, June, 1995

- *Questions and Answers on Senate Bill 1: Frequently Asked Questions Relating to Senate Bill 1*, Texas Education Agency, Office of Governmental Relations, July 20, 1995

- *Glossary for the Academic Excellence Indicator System, 1993-94 Report*, Texas Education Agency, October, 1994

- *Rules and Regulations for Providing Special Education Services*, Texas Education Agency, Division of Special Education, August, 1995

Appendix D

Related Issues

During the discussions of the *project focus group* many issues related to the topics under study arose. However, it was acknowledged that they were not included in the charge to this project. In order to ensure that the value of each of these was not lost and would in some way be considered in further study and development, they are included here in brief:

• *Implications for Other Student Groups of Students with Special Needs*

Other groups of students with special needs, beyond those who qualify for special education services, should also be considered when determining eligibility for accommodations and alternative assessment options. Many of these students who are labeled as low performing may be unfairly designated without accommodations or alternative assessment options that might enhance their performance. Their aggregated results may also significantly impact district and campus data when held to the standard administration procedures for the TAAS. These include, but are not limited to:

- students eligible under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973,
- students of limited English proficiency (LEP),
- students dismissed from special education services who cannot pass the standard TAAS, and
- low achieving, at-risk students who cannot pass the standard TAAS.

• *Discussions of Appropriateness of TAAS for All Students*

There was discussion about the appropriateness/desirability of the TAAS as the measure used for any of Texas' student populations. It was recognized that considerable resources have been allocated to the development, expansion, and continuous improvement of the current state assessment. TEA's continued monitoring and review of the state assessment measures in place is supported. Ongoing development activities should continue to include diligent assurance of the alignment of the state TAAS objectives with core instructional areas.

•*Use of Off-Level Testing*

When accommodations are reviewed and alternative assessments are developed, off-level testing using the TAAS may be considered as an option for a nonstandard administration. Some students may be at a specified grade level placement, but may be performing at a different grade level. Off-level testing would not be used as comparable TAAS data for accountability purposes, but would only be used as to determine performance at the instructional level being taught.

Related Issues (continued)

• *Quality and Use of Individual Educational Plans (IEPs)*

Although Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are intended to be used to track the performance of students with disabilities, reliance on IEPs as accurate and/or appropriate measures of student improvement has limitations. It is recognized that some of the performance indicators in the new Results-Based Monitoring system have been designed to address these limitations. However, continuing concerns expressed by the *project focus group* about the development and use of IEPs include:

- Some personnel are not well trained in appropriate IEP development,
- IEPs may not always be aligned with content instruction and assessment,
- IEPs are sometimes not used once they are developed,
- Age-inappropriate goals/objectives are included in some IEPs,
- Limited or no change in objectives from year to year has occurred for some students,
- Limited goal setting and expectations may be included in IEPs,
- The use of computerized sets of goals/objectives allow for "generic" IEPs,
- Insufficient input from parents may limit the scope of IEP goals/objectives
- IEPs are often not used as planning documents as they are intended.

Some consideration might be given to the scope of monitoring activities related to IEPs and the training needed at the preservice and professional levels.

• *High Referral/Over-referral for Special Education Services*

High stakes accountability in Texas continues to create the perception and/or concern about high referral rates for special education service for students who do not qualify (see attached letter, TEA, 1992). Reporting the results of all students and using the performance results in some way to examine campuses and districts should be considered.

• *Requirements for Institutions of Higher Education*

Changes in student assessment and accountability have significant implications for education training programs in colleges and universities in Texas. Standards should be considered for course requirements and field-based experiences, considering increasing requirements related to special populations for all educators-in-training.

Texas
Education
Agency

1701 NORTH CONGRESS AVENUE · AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-1494 · (512) 463-9734

INFORMATION ONLY

May 6, 1992

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

Subject: Special Education Not a Remedy for Seniors Failing the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS)

The Texas Education Agency has received numerous calls about seniors being referred for special education services when they fail the exit level of the TAAS. According to the calls received, the referral usually occurs after the student has failed two or more administrations of the test. While possible, it is highly unlikely that a student would progress with passing grades to the senior level and have a handicapping condition that meets the criteria for receiving special education services.

To be eligible for special education services, an admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee must determine that the student meets the eligibility criteria for one of the handicapping conditions in Title 19 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 89, Subchapter G, Special Education, and has a need for special education services. Failing the TAAS does not constitute an educational need for special education services. In addition, exempting the student from the TAAS is not a special education service. If a student is determined to be eligible for special education, it is the district's responsibility to provide instructional and related services based on the needs of the student, not just on exemption from the TAAS.

I am asking for the cooperation of all superintendents and principals in contacting your education service center for assistance in helping seniors pass the TAAS and in referring for special education services only those students suspected of having a handicapping condition. Your attention to this should result in more immediate and appropriate help to seniors and in fewer seniors being referred just prior to graduation for special education assessment - a very costly process.

If you have questions regarding this issue, please contact the Division of Special Education at (512) 463-9414.

Sincerely,

Jay Cummings

J. R. Cummings
Executive Deputy Commissioner
for Programs and Instruction

Appendix E

Texas Assessment of Academic Skills
Spring 1995

TAAS

COORDINATOR MANUAL

District and Campus

March Test Administration

- TAAS Exit Level Writing, Mathematics, and Reading
- TEAMS Mathematics and English Language Arts
- TAAS Writing at Grades 4 and 8

May Test Administration

- TAAS Mathematics and Reading for Grades 3 through 8
- TAAS Grade 8 Social Studies and Science
- TAAS Exit level Writing, Mathematics, and Reading for Graduating Seniors and Out-of-School Examinees

TESTING PROGRAM OVERVIEW
DISTRICT COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES
CAMPUS COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES
APPENDICES
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Testing Modifications

Certain test administration procedures that do not cause test results to be invalid may be used.

The decision to use a particular modification with a student should be made on an individual basis and should take into consideration the needs of the student and whether the student routinely receives the modification in classroom instruction.

Allowable Modifications

- ☐ Instructions given orally before or after the test may be signed to an examinee with a hearing impairment or translated into the native language of an examinee with limited English proficiency. Test items, including the written composition prompt, must not be signed or translated.
- ☐ Examinees may place a colored transparency over the test, or they may use a place marker with the test and the answer document.
- ☐ Examinees may receive an individual administration of the assessment instrument and, in this setting, may read aloud as they work.
- ☐ The examinee may use a large-print version of the test.
- ☐ The examinee may use a braille version of the test.
- ☐ The examinee may use a magnifying glass when testing.
- ☐ Examinees may respond orally to test items, mark responses in their test booklet, or type their responses if they have a disabling condition that interferes with their ability to record machine-readable responses. If an examinee must dictate a composition, the examinee must spell out all words and indictate all capital letters and punctuation marks. Afterward, the examinee must be allowed to read over the composition and indicate where he or she would like to make corrections. The test administrator must record these responses verbatim on a standard answer document. It is recommended that administrators write "Transcribed by (NAME) because (REASON)" at the top of the answer document. Test responses cannot be scored unless they appear on the answer document.
- ☐ The examinee may type the TAAS written composition on a typewriter or on a computer but may not use the computer's "spell check" feature or save the document. The composition **must** be transcribed onto a regular answer document for scoring. It is recommended that administrators write "Transcribed by (NAME) because (REASON)" at the top of the answer document.

Nonallowable Modifications

- The examinee may not receive any special reading assistance on the writing or reading tests. Students who are identified as having dyslexia or a related disorder may qualify for an oral administration of the mathematics, Grade 8 social studies, and/or Grade 8 science tests.
- The examinee may not use a calculator.
- The examinee may not use a slide rule.
- The examinee may not use English-language or foreign-language reference materials.
- Other modifications that would make the test invalid are prohibited.

Oral Administration

A test administrator may read aloud the test questions and answer choices for the mathematics, Grade 8 social studies, and/or Grade 8 science tests to those eligible TAAS examinees who are identified as having dyslexia or a related disorder and who regularly receive this modification in the classroom. This modification is available only for the mathematics, social studies, and science sections of the TAAS test. It is not available for the TEAMS test.

The decision to provide an oral administration to students receiving special education services should be made by the student's admission, review, and dismissal committee. For students not in special education, this determination rests with the committee that is required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to make the student's placement decisions. Directions for reading aloud the mathematics, social studies, and science tests are in Appendix B.

> Modifications that would invalidate the test should not be used for exempt students who test if results are to be compared to results for non-exempt students.

Test Eligibility

1) All students who are scheduled to complete the second semester of an Algebra I or a Biology I course in May **must** take the end-of-course examination. This includes students of limited English proficiency and students served through special education.

Exception: A special education student whose admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee specifies in the individual educational plan (IEP) the need for *content modification* in the course will not be required to take an end-of-course examination. In such a case, the following points should be kept in mind:

- Testing is not appropriate because the student's disability prevents him or her from mastering part of the actual *course content.*
- Course credit for a student with *content modification* will be accompanied by the letter "S" on the student transcript.
- A district may give the test to the student for local purposes. The "C" in the "Score Code" field on the answer document should be marked so that the student's test will not be scored by the state. However, the answer document must be submitted but will be scanned for demographic information only.

2) Students who are scheduled to complete the second semester of Algebra I or Biology I prior to May **may** take the end-of-course examination.

3) Students who are retaking the first semester of Algebra I or Biology I are **not** required to test.

Test Modifications

Certain test administration procedures that do not invalidate test results may be used.

The decision to use a particular modification with a student should be made on an individual basis and should take into consideration the needs of the student and whether the student routinely receives the modification in classroom instruction.

Modifications Allowable in a Standard Administration

- Instructions given orally before or after the test may be signed to a student with a hearing impairment or translated into the native language of a student with limited English proficiency.

- A student may place a colored transparency over the test or use a place marker with the test and answer document.

- Students may receive an individual administration of the assessment instrument and, in this setting, may read aloud as they work.

- A student may use a large-print version of the test.

- A student may use a braille version of the test.

- Students may respond orally to test items, mark responses in their test booklet, or type responses if they have a disabling condition that interferes with their ability to record machine-readable responses. The test administrator must record these responses verbatim on a standard answer document. It is recommended that administrators write "Transcribed by (NAME) because (REASON)" at the top of the answer document.

Modifications Allowable in a Nonstandard Administration

Certain *nonstandard* administration procedures may be necessary for students who are required to test. The use of a *nonstandard* administration procedure must be indicated on the student's answer document and will be noted on the student's performance report. The following modifications are allowable in a *nonstandard* administration.

- A student with dyslexia or a related disorder may receive an oral administration of an end-of-course test.
- A limited English proficient student may use a dictionary that provides translations of English words if such a dictionary is used as part of his or her regular classroom instruction.
- A limited English proficient student may have words on the test translated into his or her native language if this assistance is part of his or her regular classroom instruction. In providing a student with translation assistance, only native-language equivalents for English words or phrases may be given. The translator must be careful not to provide interpretations that would allow the student an advantage in arriving at a correct response.

The decision to provide an oral administration to students receiving special education services should be made by the student's admission, review, and dismissal committee. For students not in special education, this determination rests with the committee that is required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to make the students' placement decisions.

The decision to allow the use of a bilingual dictionary or a translator should be made by the district and should take into account the individual needs of the student and whether the student routinely receives the modification in classroom instruction.

✎ **If a student receives any of the modifications allowable in a nonstandard administration, the test administrator must complete the field "NS" (nonstandard administration) on the front of the answer document.**

Test Materials

The Austin Operations Center sent an order form to all districts in January allowing them to order the number of booklets needed. The number of test booklets a district is scheduled to receive for the Algebra I and Biology I tests will be based on the number ordered by districts.

End-of-course materials will be received and returned separately from TAAS materials.